

# DIAMOND DICK

BOYS BEST

## JR. WEEKLY JR.

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 303.

Price, Five Cents.

### DIAMOND DICK JR'S MINING VENTURE



BY THE AUTHOR OF "DIAMOND DICK"

GALBRAITH'S RIGHT ARM WAS HELPLESS, BUT WITH HIS LEFT HE QUICKLY FIRED, JUST GRAZING DIAMOND DICK, JR.

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No. 303.

NEW YORK, August 2, 1902.

Price Five Cents.

## Diamond Dick, Jr.'s, Mining Venture;

OR,

### THE MYSTERY OF SHAFT No. 3.

By the author of "DIAMOND DICK."

#### CHAPTER I.

##### THE VITRIOL THROWER—FOILING A FIEND.

"Then you would not have me murder him?"

The tongue that framed these words did it in a guarded tone, but nevertheless the sentence struck on the night air with startling distinctness.

A young man had come along a road past a yard bordered with a high fence. He had paused abruptly and laid his hands on top of the fence and leaped lightly over it.

That done, he had found himself in a yard dense with trees and shrubbery, through which shone a light from a house not very far distant.

"I don't see why Thompson wanted me to come like a thief in the night," the young man muttered, "but I presume he had his reasons."

After that brief soliloquy he had started slowly toward the house when the words which head this

chapter broke upon his ear, causing him a start of surprise.

After a moment's thought, the youth crept forward stealthily until he saw the dark outlines of two men just ahead of him.

The house was scarce twenty feet from where these dark shadows lingered.

Through a long window, the sash of which was hinged and opened like a double door upon the piazza, could be seen the figure of an elderly man seated reflectively before a desk, his head bowed in his hand.

This man was evidently an object of much concern to the two men lurking in the bushes.

"Murder him?" returned the other voice. "No. But, curse him! he uses those weasel eyes of his too well; I want you to take care of his eyes."

"How? Is there any danger in it?"

"No, no danger; I have prepared everything, and you will have plain sailing."

"All right, I'm your man, fer the price. All you have got ter do is post me, and I'll take care of the job."

"Yes, you are all right, I know. Now, give attention."

The youth was near enough to them now to hear everything that passed between them.

"This detective," the speaker continued, "always smokes a heathenish hookah pipe before going to bed. I have put up a job on him, with the help of the nigger cook who once worked for me. I know the black rascal well; he would sell his soul. He has steeped our gentleman's tobacco in a tincture of opium, according to my directions, and when the detective grows unconscious, as he will when he smokes, he will be in your hands."

"And I'll go in through the open window. But what is it you want me to do?"

"I'll tell you: Here is a vial that contains vitriol, and while he sleeps you will pour the stuff——"

"Ah! I see. You want me to take care of his eyes, you said; you want me to blind him with the vitriol."

"That's it. That will prevent his prying further into my affairs, and it will be a lesson to others to keep away."

If the fellow felt a particle of aversion for the hellish deed under contemplation, neither by voice nor manner did he make it manifest.

A moment of silence followed, while they watched.

Presently the man in the house, who could be plainly seen through the open window, raised his head and turned in his chair.

"Pedro!" he called.

His voice could be distinctly heard by those without.

"Si, senor!" another answered.

"My pipe."

"At once, senor."

The echo of these words had barely died away when a diminutive Mexican passed before the open window and set a nargileh pipe upon the desk, uncoiled the long rubber stem, and placed the amber mouthpiece in his master's hand; then, after placing bit of live charcoal in the bowl, Pedro disappeared.

At first the watching youth started forward as if he would warn the man not to put the mouthpiece to his lips.

He paused, however, and drew back, and the man began smoking.

For a time he whiffed the pipe with evident enjoyment, but presently his eyes began to grow dull and humid.

His hands dropped and hung limp by the sides of the chair, and at last the mouthpiece slipped from his lips and his chin dropped forward upon his breast.

Why had the youth not spoken? Why had he allowed this?

The man in the house was now helpless.

What would now follow?

"You see, Luke, he is in your hands," said the one of the two rascals who directed the other. "Do your duty, now; I will watch you from here."

"You bet. You keep your eye on me, an' you'll see."

This fellow addressed as Luke crossed the intervening space between their position and the house, mounted silently to the piazza, and entered the room by the open window.

There he paused for a moment and looked around, and then drawing the vial of vitriol from his pocket, he advanced upon his victim, going around the chair and approaching from the other side so that the entire operation might be witnessed from without.

Meantime, the youth had not been idle.

Creeping forward with wonderful stealth and rapidity, he gained the piazza, where he stood watching, revolver in hand.

Before the man inside could perform the diabolical act he had been commissioned to do, the sharp crack of a revolver echoed through the room.

The vial of vitriol was broken by the bullet in the hands of the man who had been on the point of making such a devilish use of it, and instantly his palms and fingers were being seared and eaten with burning liquid.

So great was the pain that the fellow uttered an agonized scream and dashed about the room half crazed.

The youth leaped in at the window to make him prisoner.

Seeing this, the fellow darted toward another window and made good his escape.

The youth turned just in time to see the other man—the master mind of all this devilry—leap into the room.

This man was large and muscular, was well dressed, and apparently was aristocratic.

He carried a knife in his hand, however, and there was a savage look on his face.

He leaped at the youth with all the fury of a rabid dog.

But the young man was not to be taken at at disadvantage, and his fist shot out like a flash.

The knife was knocked from his assailant's hand, and the youth stood on the defensive awaiting his further attack.

"Curse you!" growled the man, with an oath. "If I can't knife you, I'll wring your neck!"

"Come and try it on," was the fearless response.

The other did try it on, but despite his size and strength the youth threw him to the floor.

Just then rapid steps were heard in the hall, and the door of the room was thrown violently open.

"What's the meaning of all this hubbub?" cried a portly gentleman who burst into the room armed with a blunderbuss that looked as if it had done duty in the days of Columbus.

He stopped short, trying to take in the situation at one mental gulp, as it were.

"Some one fired a shot," he went on; "some one yelled, and now what do I find going on in my house, anyhow. Thompson! Thompson! Why, he is as limp as a rag in his chair. What is the matter with him? Stop fighting, you two, and explain, or I'll blow out both your brains where you are!"

"Hold on! Don't shoot!" called out the larger of the two, in haste. "You wouldn't shoot me, judge?"

The youth allowed him to rise, just then.

The well-dressed man got up with a slight smile, and the portly gentleman exclaimed:

"You! Can it be possible? Colonel Galbraith here, and at this hour? Explain—explain!"

"Yes, I will explain. I heard a scheme between this fancy youth and a pal to rob you, and I followed them here to take them in the act. I got this fellow all right, as you see, but his accomplice got away——"

"You infernal liar!" cried the youth, interrupting, and his eyes blazed with indignation. "Just let me explain it, sir. This man, here, whom you call Colonel Galbraith, plotted with a fellow villain to burn out the eyes of the man in the chair yonder——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Galbraith. "Can you swallow that story, judge?"

"To burn out his eyes? Absurd—absurd!"

"It is the truth, sir! His accomplice was going to do the work with vitriol."

"Ha, ha, ha! Why, you young fool, what cock-and-bull story is this? How can you expect to impose upon the sound sense of Judge Dolliver to such an extent?"

"You hold your trap till I have told all!" cried the enraged youth. "I prevented the deed, sir. Then, when this villain set upon me with that knife you see lying yonder, I grappled with him, and that was the noise that brought you here."

The judge looked upon Galbraith with amazement.

The rascal waved his hand disdainfully, as if the whole were too preposterous a tale to be entertained for a moment.

"But what about the other fellow, since you claim this gentleman had an accomplice?" demanded the judge.

"Why, my bullet broke the bottle of vitriol he held, and he ran off howling with his burned fingers. The gentleman in the chair is unconscious from the effects of opium mixed with his tobacco—which was also a part of this rascal's scheming."

"What have you to say about this. Colonel Galbraith?" cried the judge.

The villain was laughing.

"If it were not so ridiculous, I would get riled about it," was the answer. "That desperate young villain lies by the watch! All he imputes to me, he did himself. It was I who saved Mr. Thompson, your guest."

"Liar!" cried the youth, and he would have leaped upon the man again had not the judge interposed his blunderbuss.

"I leave it with you, judge," said Colonel Galbraith. "You know me, and you do not know him."

"I accept your story, of course," returned the judge. Then, turning to the youth, he sternly demanded: "Who are you, sir?"

"I am Diamond Dick, Jr.," was the reply; "perhaps better known by that sobriquet than by my real name, Bertie Wade."

Colonel Galbraith gave a slight start, and stared hard at the youth.

"Never heard of you," declared the judge. "What have you to say for yourself?"

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"Wait until Mr. Thompson recovers, and he will vouch for me."

"No, sir," growled the judge. "If you cannot clear yourself, we will wait for nothing, but will turn you over to the marshal at once."

"You are not giving me a chance to clear myself, sir. Are there no proofs for what I assert? Is not your guest drugged? See here on the carpet the marks of the vitriol? Do these facts count for nothing?"

"Against my honorable word, nothing," sneered Colonel Galbraith. "I'll go for a marshal for you, judge, and if he tries to get away while I am gone just let go at him with your blunderbuss, no matter if you do kill him. After capturing him for you, I'd hate to see him get away."

"All right, go ahead, and you will find him here on your return, never fear. He will be here, dead or alive."

The judge spoke in a grim fashion.

Colonel Galbraith hastened out, and he had hardly disappeared when a trembling voice was heard in a far corner of the room, and there from under a couch appeared the little Mexican. Pedro.

### CHAPTER II.

A WITNESS—LAYING A SCHEME—LEADING TRUMPS.

"You!"

So cried the judge.

"Si, senor. I saw everything."

"Then why didn't you give the alarm? What did you mean by skulking there like a coward?"

"Ay! I was afraid for my life, senor. Besides, I did not know what was the purpose of the man, until I heard it later. I crave pardon, my master."

"Your master! I am not your master, you black-and-tan! There is your master, and if you can do anything for him you had better be doing it as soon as possible."

"Do you mean to say you were there and saw it all?" here put in Diamond Dick, Jr.

"Si, senor."

"Then please tell this gentleman just what you saw. He will not accept my statement, seeing that I am a stranger to him."

"He is innocent, senor," the Mexican declared. "It was as he told you, senor; he came in, but the

man made his escape, and when the other man entered he fought with him."

"Are you telling the truth, you rascal?"

"Si, senor."

The judge looked at Diamond Dick, Jr., searchingly.

"You don't look like a villain, now that I come to study your face a little," he observed. "Tell me more about yourself; what brought you here?"

"I came here to keep an appointment with this man, sir."

"What way did you come?"

"Over the rear fence and up through the grounds."

"That is a strange statement. Why did you come that way, if your errand were honest?"

"I don't know why I was told to come that way; no doubt the gentleman had a reason, which he will give you when he comes out of his stupor. But he will not come out of that in a hurry, without help."

"What is to be done?"

"Can you do anything for him, Pedro?"

"No, senor; but I think I know of somebody who can."

"Who is that?"

"The Chineese, Won Key, who keeps the opium shop. Chinamen go to him when they get too much."

"Then go for him as soon as you can, and bring him here. Tell him what is the matter, so he can come prepared."

"Si, senor."

"Off with you!"

The Mexican was off in haste, and Bertie turned to the judge.

"Well, are you any more inclined to accept my word, now that I have a witness?" he asked.

"Young man, I am bewildered," was the response.

"So you well may be, sir. I am in somewhat that condition myself. I don't know what to make of it all."

"You tell me Thompson sent for you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you know him?"

"Never saw him before in my life, but in his note he said he had heard of me and wanted to see me."

"What did he want of you?"

"You will have to ask me something easier than that?"

"You don't know?"

"No."

"Did he make no mention in the note of what he wanted?"

"Not a word. Still, I inferred that it was something in the way of detective business."

"Then you are a detective?"

"Well, something of an amateur," said Bertie, modestly.

"That may account for it, then. But, impossible, impossible! If I believe you, and take your word, I must think my friend Galbraith an utter villain, and that——"

"He is!" cried Bertie, finishing the sentence patly.

"It is impossible for me to think so; I cannot comprehend it. Under all these mysteries I wonder that I do not go mad."

"Then this is not the only mystery you have here?"

"No, no, not by a good deal."

"What is the other?"

"I can tell you nothing, having as yet nothing but your word against the word of a man I know well."

"Certainly, that's all right. Still, you have the word of the Mexican. That ought to count for something. Well, wait till we hear what this man has to say."

"Yes, he will no doubt throw some light upon the matter."

The judge was now less excited than he had been at first.

He could see that Diamond Dick, Jr., did not have the stamp of a cutthroat.

But, then, neither had his guest, Colonel Galbraith.

It puzzled him.

He stood near the door with his blunderbuss in hand, and thought he was standing guard over Diamond Dick, Jr.

The fact of the matter was, Bertie could have dropped him like a wink at any moment, had it been necessary for his good health, in spite of the blunderbuss.

The rest of the household had come to the door, but the judge had ordered everybody to keep out of the room.

After a while the Mexican returned, with a Chinaman in tow.

They entered by the window.

"What wantee me?" queried the Celestial, as he looked around the room. "Man too much smokee?"

"He has had a dose of opium in his tobacco," said Bertie, "and I want you to bring him out of his sleep, if you can."

"How long been so?"

"Twenty minutes, perhaps; not any more."

"All light, me see what can do; allee samee think bling him 'lound all light."

"Go ahead, and a twenty-dollar coin is your reward if you do the trick in five minutes," promised Bertie.

The Chinaman took a vial from a pocket somewhere in his raiment, and, going to where the unconscious man still reclined in the chair, pulled up his head and dropped some of the contents of the vial into his mouth.

"There, now we see," he said, as he returned the vial to its place under his blouse.

A minute passed, then another.

At the end of that time the drugged detective began to twitch.

Presently a sigh escaped him, and he opened his eyes and looked at those around him in a dazed manner.

"Allee samee him be all light in two minutes more," promised the Chinaman. "Give me twenty dol, me git."

"Here you are," cried Bertie, tossing him the promised coin.

"What has been going on here?" inquired the detective, as he sat up and looked from one to another.

"You had a close call for your life, sir," answered Bertie. "If I had not arrived just when I did, in response to your note, you would now be a dead man."

"My note—dead man—— What does it all mean?"

"Do you remember sending for Diamond Dick, Jr.?"

"Yes, yes; now I recall that; and you are he?"

"I am he?"

"But what has happened to me. Was there a Chinaman here a moment ago?"

"Yes; he brought you out of a stupor."

"That's all right, then. I thought maybe my brain was playing me tricks."

"No, you saw a Chinaman, all right."

"Well, well, tell me everything; I am all at sea. Isn't that vitriol that I smell?"

"Yes; and only for me it would have been dashed in your face to put out your eyes. I tell you you have had a close call, Mr. Thompson."

Diamond Dick, Jr., hurriedly stated the facts.

"And you say he has gone for a marshal?" the detective demanded, when Bertie concluded.

"Yes; he has gone for a marshal to put me under arrest. You see, he shifts the whole thing off upon my shoulders."

"What proof can you show?"

"This Mexican servant of yours saw it all."

"Then you are all right. And you can prove to me that you are Diamond Dick, Jr.?"

"Does not my appearance prove it?"

"You have that note I sent you?"

"Yes."

Bertie produced it.

"That settles it," said the detective. "Judge Dolliver, I have asked all this to satisfy you. Do you think Colonel Galbraith will be back again?"

"I do not know," answered the judge, passing his hand over his brow. "I am all befogged."

"I think he will be back," spoke up Bertie.

"Why do you think so?" asked Thompson.

"He does not know there was a witness, and he has too much at stake, evidently, to give up easily."

"Yes, yes, no doubt you are right. Are you willing to play into his hands, for the sake of trapping him finally?"

"Bet your life!"

"And you, judge—can we depend on you?"

"Yes; I will do whatever you say," was the answer.

"You see, sir, it will be giving Colonel Galbraith a chance to go his full length, and he will hang himself—I have had my eye on him before this."

"Do just as you please, gentlemen; I have nothing to say."

"But you must have something to say. When he comes back, if he does come back, you must appear to believe in him as strongly as ever."

At that moment steps were heard on the front porch, and there came a tug at the bell.

"There he is," cried Bertie.

"Yes, and means to fight it out. Might cover the young man with your blunderbuss, for effect, judge."

This the judge did, and the door opened.

Into the room came Colonel Galbraith, closely followed by a rough-looking man with a full black beard.

"There he is," said Galbraith, pointing.

"That's the chap, hey?"

The marshal had a gun in hand, and he advanced upon Bertie.

Bertie could have put up a good fight for him, even though he had the drop, had it been needful to do so.

"Put up yer hands," the marshal ordered.

Bertie complied.

"What have you got to say for yourself now?" demanded Galbraith. "I guess you have seen the folly of accusing a man of my standing of such a crime as you said had been attempted here."

"It is your inning," said Bertie.

"Yes, and it will be a home run—for you, to the lockup," and the marshal laughed at his own attempt at a joke.

"His story is preposterous and not to be believed for a moment," now spoke up the detective. "I have to thank you, Colonel Galbraith, for your timely interference in my behalf, if it is as Judge Dolliver has stated to me."

"And I have no doubt he told it straight."

"Do you mind giving me the particulars again?"

"Not at all. I heard a scheme between this youth and a pal of his to come here and rob the judge, and I took a hand in it. The accomplice got away, but I nailed this fellow hard enough and held on to him, too. The judge found me holding him when he came in."

"Yes; that's so," admitted the judge.

"But there are some things that I don't quite understand," the detective went on. "Here I have been unconscious and there is the smell of vitriol in the room——"

"Why, as to the vitriol, his pal tried to throw some in my face when I came in upon them."

"Then you deserve more than credit for your courage. I shall not forget your good office in my behalf, Colonel Galbraith. Marshal, you will see to it that the prisoner does not get away?"

"Well, I should smile, sir."

"Before you take him, however, I want to have a talk with him in private. Just disarm him and let me have his weapons, and you may wait for him in the hall."

"Are you not taking a risk?" interposed Colonel Galbraith.

"Oh, no; none whatever. Just place him here before me on this chair, and if he makes a hostile move I will shoot him like a dog. You need have no concern for me, colonel."

Thereupon, Bertie was disarmed and his weapons were handed to the detective, and he was ordered to

take his place on a chair that had been put in front of that occupied by the detective. The windows were then closed, and all the others retired from the room.

### CHAPTER III.

THOMPSON'S STORY—PLANS LAID—BERTIE LOCKED UP.

It was a peculiar situation.

Bertie had submitted to the arrangement because he had full confidence in the detective.

"Now, you young villain," said the detective, in loud tones, "I want a straight story out of you, or it will go all the harder with you."

At the same time he gave a nod to imply that his words were intended for ears outside the door.

"I have told you all I have to tell," said Bertie, in similar tone.

"We'll see about that."

"All right; let's see you begin, then."

"Who was your pal?"

"None of your business."

A minute or so of this, and gradually their voices were lowered.

"I guess that will do for ears outside," said Thompson, then. "Now, I haven't the slightest doubt but that you have told me the truth."

"Every word of it, sir," Bertie assured. "I hardly like the rôle you have laid out for me, but it was no time to balk when the others were in the room. Do you want me to submit to being locked up, too?"

"We will talk that over, and I'll leave it with you."

"All right; talk ahead."

"No doubt you desire to know why I sent for you?"

"Well, yes."

"It was concerning this very Colonel Galbraith."

"Ha! That so? But I am not greatly surprised, now, of course. What else has he been up to?"

"A good deal else; you have heard some hint of it, and you can see that it must be of moment when he would burn out my eyes to keep me from working the matter further."

"You are right. Heavens! but that was a dastardly scheme!"

"It was just so dastardly that he will pay dearly for it, if I am spared to work the case to the end."

"Then you fear for your life?"

"Naturally; and you will have need to fear for yours, after this night's business."

"Oh! I was not born to be killed by such a fellow as he. I am not going to tender my chips to the cashier for many a day yet, you bet."

"Well, I hope not. It is well to have youthful confidence. Now, as to what I wanted of you, it was to take my place in a measure and play shadow upon Galbraith."

"Nothing would have suited me better."

"I believe it; but now, unfortunately, you have been seen, and he is on his guard."

"That's so."

"You see, I am satisfied that he has spies upon me, and so I am handicapped; but if you could have come here unknown to him or any of his crew and spied upon him while he was giving all his attention to me, we could soon have dumped his apples for him."

"Well, is it too late yet?"

"Can you think of any plan?"

"Do you think you can get me out of jail between now and morning if I am locked up?"

"Yes, I know I can do that; that is my plan, in fact."

"Then I can come here in another guise and play the game just as well as if I had caught on right in the first place."

"That is a good thought; that is something like I was fishing for."

"Well, give me the rest of the scheme."

"You see, your coming as I told you, over the fence and through the grounds, led to your discovery, but, thank God, it saved my life! Ah! but there will be a day of reckoning."

"Yes, yes; but the scheme."

"Well, here it is: I will give you back your weapons—here, take them; and will have my own in hand when they return for you. Submit tamely and go with them, and be ready to act on short notice when the time comes to release you."

"All right; so far, so good."

"And what will you do then?"

"It all depends on what more you have to tell me."

"That's so; I forgot for the moment that you were not in full possession of the case. I am a secret service man, and I am really after a gang of counterfeiters who are operating somewhere in this part of the country. Incidentally, I have undertaken to solve a mystery for Mr. Dolliver."

"I begin to see. Go ahead with it."

"There is a mystery in connection with his mines here—the mystery of shaft No. 3, they call it."

"What is it like?"

"Why, it is haunted, for one thing, and then every man who has the courage to go there to work is murdered, and when the body is found there is always a peculiar V-shaped mark on it."

"How big a mark?"

"Not large—half an inch in size, maybe; usually found on the forehead."

"Sharp cut, or a burn?"

"Oh, a clean cut, neat as wax."

"Might it not be a cut with a graver's tool?"

"Ah! I see that you connect the two things, the same as I do myself. You are right—ten to one you are. I believe that it not only may be such, but that it is, in fact."

"Then your counterfeiters and the haunted mine have something in common."

"That's it exactly."

"Good enough. Now, I'll tell you what I'll do."

"Let me hear it."

"I'll engage to go down into shaft No. 3 and lay that ghost."

"Why, it will be as much as your life is worth!"

"No matter; I tell you I was not born to go under at the hands of such fellows."

"But, think what a daring venture! Why, if these men could get hold of you down there in the bowels of the earth, after this night's business, your life would not be worth a pinch of snuff."

"Can't help it; that is just the kind of venture I like, one that has a spice of danger about it."

"A spice of danger! Why, this fairly bristles with it."

Now and again, of course, a louder sentence or two would be spoken, for the benefit of listening ears, to carry on the deception.

"Well, is there anything further to be talked of?" inquired Bertie, at last.

"No, I guess not; and we must bring it to a close, anyhow, or there will be suspicions awakened."

"Then I may look for you to release me some time before morning?"

"Yes, positively, unless something very unforeseen happens to prevent me from carrying out the scheme."

"But if you are watched, as you say——"

"I have Pedro; he is worth a good deal to me at times, and this may be one of the times."

"All right; let 'er go."

"Well, you young scoundrel, you are shrewd," this in louder tone, "but I will have the truth out of you yet, if you are at all capable of speaking the truth."

"The trouble with you is that you wouldn't believe the truth if you did get it," retorted Bertie. "I have been giving you the truth all along, but you are so blind that you won't believe anything. Say, I'm getting tired of this chinning with you."

"And I am tired of your company. Ho! marshal!"

The door opened in a moment, and the marshal entered, followed by Colonel Galbraith and Judge Doliver.

"Well, what do you make out of him?" asked the judge.

"He persists in telling the same story," answered Thompson, "and there is no use my wasting any more time with him."

"You are right there," cried Galbraith. "The idea, his making such a charge against a man of my standing! Why, he must have taken you all for fools, I would say."

"I'll fool him, and that in short order," declared the marshal. "I will lodge him in the lockup."

"Yes, take him," said Thompson. "By the way, I will retain these weapons, for they may be the means of—— But, no matter, I will not say any more in his presence."

The weapons the detective had in his hands were his own, as we know, but no one gave them more than a casual glance.

The marshal laid a hand on Bertie's shoulder.

"Will you come with me without making a fuss?" he demanded.

"I suppose I had better," answered Bertie.

The marshal had a gun in hand.

"Well, you have hit it right once, anyhow," he grimly rejoined. "If you go to cutting up, you will get a dose of this."

He displayed the revolver menacingly.

"Don't worry; I have got sense enough to know when the other fellow holds the best hand," said Bertie.

"Well, it's lucky for you that you have, this time."

He was prepared to take him away.

"By the way, sir," to Mr. Thompson, "did you find out who he is?"

"No more than what he declares, that he is Diamond Dick, Jr. There is something mysterious about it all."

"That be hanged! We have the word of Colonel Galbraith against his, and his story don't go down. But he'll have a chance to prove up, to-morrow."

"Yes, that's so!"

"Or be proven down," added Colonel Galbraith. "The very story he has told, against my word, ought to be enough to satisfy any jury that can be gotten together here. But, away with him!"

Bertie maintained what seemed to be a sullen silence.

The marshal tightened his grip upon his shoulder and led him out of the house.

Bertie had put his weapons well out of sight under his sash, and, of course, the marshal could have no suspicion that he was armed, having once searched and disarmed him.

"Well, you have gotten yourself into a pretty scrape now, haven't you?" the marshal observed, as he led his prisoner to the jail.

"Yes, it seems I have," answered Bertie.

"And do you still insist that you are Diamond Dick, Jr.?"

"I am nobody else."

"Can you prove it?"

"Don't my attire speak for me?"

"You might wear Diamond Dick, Jr.'s, clothes, and still not be he."

"Well, I am not going to waste breath trying to convince you. Lead on to your lockup, and I hope there is a good bed there."

"You will find it plenty hard."

"No matter, if it will answer the purpose."

If the marshal had been debating in mind whether or not to put a guardsman at the jail, this ought to have decided him—perhaps it did."

Arriving at the place, the door was unlocked, and Bertie was thrust in, and the marshal lighted a lantern that hung from a wire in one corner, thus revealing their surroundings.

"I would handcuff you, but it would be all foolishness to do that," the marshal observed. "You see your prison is of stone and iron, and I would defy you to get out of here in a year, let alone half a

night. There is your bed—but, take your choice of the lot."

There were four bunks ranged along the wall on one side of the room.

"All right, either one will answer me," said Bertie. "And don't forget me when it comes time for breakfast."

"Oh, you will be cared for all right, never fear."

"Well, then, good-night."

"Good-night."

Bertie had talked merely to give the marshal the assurance of his belief of the certainty of his remaining there.

The marshal turned low the light of the lantern and went out, locking the door after him, and giving it a good shaking to make sure that it was thoroughly secure.

He had been gone but a little while when Bertie put out the light.

In view of what was to take place, he thought it best to have the jail in darkness.

He had glanced at his watch before doing so, noting the time.

There were windows to the place, but they were very narrow and high up, and were barred with iron.

He had to stand up on the bunks to look out, and he took care to make as good a study of his surroundings as possible in the darkness.

It would not do for him to fall asleep, that he knew; so he kept on his feet and paced slowly up and down the small room, while he waited anxiously for his release.

Gradually the sounds about the town subsided, lights disappeared, and at last Bertie caught the sound of a stealthy footstep just without the door of the jail, and then came the clicking of the key as it was being put in the lock.

But it was not Thompson.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### A CLEVER SCHEME, AND HOW IT WORKED.

When Bertie had been taken from the house, Judge Dolliver, Colonel Galbraith, and the detective fell to talking about the strange events.

The detective, of course, did not press the essential points—the testimony of his servant, the Mexican, the fact that he had sent for Diamond Dick, Jr., and the further evidence.

He allowed Galbraith to impose upon the judge for the time being, in order to make his downfall all the more complete when the time came.

Even to Galbraith he expressed thanks for his timely intervention.

Finally they parted company, and Galbraith said he would go out for a turn about town before retiring for the night.

The judge expressed his intention of retiring at once, and the detective the same. He said he guessed he would try to sleep without the consolation of his hooka for one night.

Let us follow Galbraith.

When he left the house he made his way to the busy portion of the town.

On the way he had buttoned his coat well up to his throat, pulled his broad-brim hat down, and tied a bandanna handkerchief around his neck as some disguise.

In this manner he went to one of the low saloons of the town.

He entered and made his way to a half-shaded corner, where he dropped down by one of the tables.

Looking well around, he caught sight of a man he desired to find, and presently he made a signal that was seen and recognized.

It brought the man over to where he sat.

"Have you seen Luke?" Galbraith inquired.

"Yes, and he is in a devil of a fix," was the answer.

"What is the matter?"

"Hands and fingers all burned with vitriol, and he is swearing that he will have your life for it."

"My life! Why, the fellow must be mad. I had nothing to do with his getting burned. I must go and see him and make it right with him. I am not the one he wants at all."

"That's what I tried ter tell him."

"He wants the fellow who fired the shot that spattered the stuff all over his hands, that's the chap he wants."

"And he is the one I want him to get, and I want you to help him. Do you catch on?"

"I guess so."

"He has been locked up in the jail."

"I know."

"And I want you and Luke, with say two or three others, to go there on the quiet and take him out and lynch him."

"By heavens! that will tickle Luke to death."

"You will have to take charge of it, his hands being sore."

"Yes, I s'pose so."

"And then another thing."

"What's that?"

"I have run some risk by coming here to see you, but things are now in a delicate shape. Luke has got to keep out of sight until his hands get entirely well."

"Do you think he'll do it?"

"By heavens, he must, he shall do it! Our safety depends on it! I will see him, for no man with vitriol burns on his hands must be brought to light, or that young fellow will have a case against me, sure."

"I thought ye had jist planned to have him lynched."

"Yes, that's so; but still something may turn up to prevent that, you know."

"Possibly."

"Yes, with such a devil as he is. Do you know who he is?"

"No."

"Well, he is Diamond Dick, Jr., one of the keenest young detectives in the whole West."

"You don't say!"

"Yes, I do say. But, I have got him on the hip, so far; the other detective is fooled, and if we can only carry out this plan of lynching him, we are likely to come out on top yet."

"And then the other?"

"We'll have to take care of him afterward."

"All right, I'm your man for the job, and if that is all I will be about et."

"That is all, except that you must take care with the men you choose, and you must make doubly sure that the chap does not get away from you."

"Bet yer life on that. But how are we to get into the jail? That's a sticker, I guess."

"Not at all."

"I don't see how it's to be done."

"I have got a key in my pocket that will fit the door."

"Ha! that clears up the last thing in the way, then. Now, we're sure of our game."

"Then, let's go and begin the plans. I must see Luke, and I will tell him what you are up to, and that you will soon be along with the boys to lynch the fellow who burned him."

"That's it."

They talked on for a few minutes longer, and Galbraith then got up and slouched out of the place.

If any one recognized him, no one paid any attention to him.

He went straight to the cabin of the fellow called Luke.

A knock on the door brought him a growl to come in.

He entered, and found his man sitting on the edge of his bunk, with his hands bandaged up, his face like a thundercloud.

"Ha! it's you, curse you!"

"There, now, keep cool!" admonished Galbraith, with a wave of the hand. "I have come to see you."

"And if I had the use of my hands you would see me to your sorrow, too! The idea, your putting that infernal stuff into my hands for such a hellish purpose!"

"What, not weakening?"

"By heavens, you were never burned with it, I guess. If it is so bad on the hands, what must it be on the face—in the eyes?"

"Now, look here, Luke. I haven't come to talk about that at all——"

"But that is what I am talkin' about, confound ye! It served me right that I got et the way I did, considerin' the use I was goin' to make of it. The only mistake was that et wasn't you, instead of me!"

"You are a fool and a calf! Shut up your blating for a minute. I am going to give you a chance for revenge upon that fellow who fired the shot that spattered it on you. He was the one did the business for you; as for the other, you know that he well deserved the vitriol."

"Then ye have got hold of that cuss?"

"He is in jail."

"Then we can't git at him."

"That is just where you can get at him. And I want you to take him out and lynch him; understand?"

"Yes, I'm in fine shape——"

"Bill and some of the boys are going to do the job, but you can be on hand for the satisfaction it well will be to you."

"Say, ye haven't got any more of that cussed stuff, have ye?"

"Vitriol?"

"Yes."

"Not handy."

"Because ef ye had, I wanted some, that was all. Well, et will be some satisfaction to see him swing, anyhow."

"And then, Luke, you have to keep out of sight till your hands get better. As I was telling Bill, there is a delicate game afoot here, now, and we have got to be shady."

Galbraith explained it all, and was still talking when the door opened, and Bill and three others entered the cabin.

"Wull, hyer we aire," said Bill.

"And ready for the business?"

"You bet!"

"Then here is the key, and I want you to see to it that you make no botch of it."

"Yer kin bet yer life on et that we won't. We'll 'venge poor Luke fer the burnin' he got on his hands, and that feller will take a long journey——"

"Wait! Something else."

"What is et?"

"His body—it must not be found. I'll tell you what: When you have hanged him enough, just pitch him down shaft No. 3. Not likely that anybody will go down there in a hurry, and he'll never be found."

"Jist as you say."

"I say that. And now I will leave you. Take good care of the job, boys, and I'll make it right with you."

"We know that."

"And if anything goes wrong there must be no splitting, you understand?"

"Don't you never worry 'bout that part of et, boss. You jist trust et all to us, and see ef we don't do et up in fine style. But, won't thar be a mystery in ther mornin'!"

"When the jail is found empty—yes, and it is a mystery that must remain one, too."

Some further remarks were exchanged, and Colonel Galbraith took leave.

It was about time for the fellows to act.

Presently they left the cabin and filed away in the direction of the jail, Bill and Luke in the van.

They approached with caution and stationed themselves near the door, and their places gained, Bill stepped to the door and inserted the key in the lock, and this was what Diamond Dick, Jr., heard.

Bertie, naturally, supposed it was Thompson who had come to release him, according to promise.

He stood near the door, ready to step out.

The key turned in the lock, and then he heard a voice whisper:

"Be ready, now."

This struck him as peculiar, and it was the only thing that in any way put him on his guard.

He got his guns where they would be easy to get at if needed, yet certain, almost, that it must be Thompson, he whispered a response.

"Yes, all ready."

There was a sudden stay of business without.

"Come, open the door," said Bertie. "I am ready, and want to get out of this."

"Well, that's what I'm hyer fer, to git ye out," came the voice from the other side. "Stand clear, now, while I open ther door without a noise."

Bertie knew well that it was not Thompson.

Still he thought perhaps it was some one whom the detective had sent in his stead.

Yet he did not forget the cautiously whispered "Be ready, now," and he was prepared for whatever might come to pass, or as near ready as he could expect to be.

Without an instant's delay, the door was flung open with sudden force, and four men leaped in.

This action was enough to apprise Bertie that they were not friends.

As these men sprang in, Bertie leaped out.

Another man stood in his way—a fellow who seemed to have his hands bundled up.

"Quick! or you lose him!" this fellow cried.

Bertie's fist met his mouth the next instant, and over he went on his head and shoulders.

Even as he fell, though, he thrust up one leg, and Bertie, stumbling over it, was sent headlong to the ground.

The others, meantime, had turned, with wild curses upon their lips, and as Bertie went down they were out and ready to pounce upon him.

Diamond Dick, Jr., had the agility of a cat.

He realized the situation, and was no sooner down than he rolled over and began to shoot.

There was no time, he knew, for him to rise before they would seize him, so he adopted the only course open to him, and even in that he had scant time.

Each shot brought forth a howl of pain, and two of the men staggered, and in the momentary confusion thus created Diamond Dick, Jr., leaped to his feet and ran.

Shots were fired after him, but the men fired too hastily.

The bullets went wide of the mark.

Knowing, then, that the shooting was likely to bring good citizens running in that direction to learn

what it meant, the miscreants hurried away, roundly swearing.

"Who would 'a' thought he could 'a' done et?" cried the fellow who had led the lynching party.

"I want ter know how he got them 'ar weepins," said another.

"And how he was so p'pared fer us," another.

Thus idly speculating, they made their way back again to the cabin of the fellow called Luke, where they talked the theme threadbare, and still did not reach a satisfactory conclusion.

## CHAPTER

### ARRIVAL OF JIM JINKS—MAD PROPOSAL.

There was excitement in Bullionville next morning.

The marshal, on going to the jail, found the door unlocked, and the prisoner gone.

There were some marks as of a scuffle on the ground outside, and some bloodstains around, but that was all that could be found.

It was remembered that shooting had been heard in the night, but that was of no rare occurrence in Bullionville, and, as it had not been long continued, no one had taken the trouble to get up to see about it.

Colonel Galbraith was able to offer some explanation respecting the absence of the prisoner.

He believed that his friends had come and rescued him.

Then why the shooting?

He could not answer that.

And who had lost the blood?

That was another poser.

Judge Dolliver was of the opinion that some one had forced the jail with a picklock, and that the prisoner had been lynched.

Since this, however, as Detective Thompson reminded him, was a reflection upon the integrity of his friend, Colonel Galbraith, he withdrew the supposition and admitted that he was baffled.

Thompson had no opinion to offer. He looked upon it as a mystery, as, of course, it was—to some of the others.

It was not so much of a mystery to him.

On the previous night he had been on his way to the jail when the firing broke forth upon the night air.

Not knowing what it meant, but surmising something of the truth, he ran forward, and was approaching when he saw Diamond Dick, Jr., break and run off in the darkness.

Thus assured of Bertie's safety, Thompson dodged behind a friendly obstacle and was not discovered.

After the others had gone, he quietly returned to the house.

And thus, while he did not know what had become of Bertie, yet he did know that he had gotten safely away.

Those who had a hand in the matter naturally were very reticent about it, and those who had been wounded were not seen around town that day.

The one uneasy man in the town was Colonel Galbraith.

And well he might be.

He knew well enough that the young man was Diamond Dick, Jr., and he would much rather have thought of him as dead at the bottom of Shaft No. 3 than alive and well and likely to appear again at any moment.

The uncertainty of his whereabouts was worse than the actual knowledge could have been.

During the morning Thompson took a walk up to the office of the Dolliver Mine.

This mine was owned principally by the judge.

It bore his name.

He entered the office and sat down to smoke a cigar with the manager, while they talked over recent events.

The mystery at the Dolliver came up for a fair share of their discussion, for, as yet, no light had been thrown upon it, although there was a standing reward of a thousand dollars to the man who could solve it.

While Thompson and the manager were talking the door of the office opened and a stranger entered.

He was a young man, rather shabbily attired.

He looked like a prospector who had been having tough luck for a month of Sundays.

His hair was tangled, his face and hands were evidently strangers to soap and water, yet his eyes had a bright flash that told of spirit.

"Sa-ay," he drawled, "is this hyer the office of ther Dolliver Mine?"

"Yes, sir," said the manager. "No men wanted, though."

"Wull, ef that's ther case you had better take down yer signboard, is all I hev got ter say."

"My signboard—— What do you mean, fellow?"

"Don't et say out thar that ye offer a thousand to ther man that will go down into Shaft No. 3 and solve a mystery?"

"And you mean to say you want to undertake that?"

"That's jist et, sir."

"Why, you are crazy, man!"

"Mebby I am. Ther fact of ther business is, I am in dead hard luck, and I am willin' ter tackle anything. Why, ef I could bag that thousand—— Whew! Go 'way, Susanna!"

The shabby, dirty fellow thrust his thumbs into the armholes of his vest, and struck an attitude that was comical.

"But, do you know that it is as much as your life is worth, young man?"

"I know et; a thousand is wuth a good deal more'n my——"

"No, no; I mean the danger of it. Maybe you don't know a thing about the mystery."

"That's about the size of et; I don't. But I know somethin' about the size of that reward ye offer, and ef I kin gobble that——"

"Not much chance of your doing it, I guess."

"Fair offer, ain't it?"

"Yes."

"No trick about et?"

"No."

"Then jist book me fer ther job, and let me have ther p'tic'lars."

"All right, if you are determined. What do you think about it, Mr. Thompson? Shall I let him commit suicide this way?"

"I would let him try it, if he is willing to assume the risks," was the response of the detective. "I warn you that it is a desperate venture, however, young man."

"Et don't matter; I have been desperate fer grub fer many a long day, now, and et's got to come to an end sooner or later."

"Then you want the story?" asked the manager.

"Yes, ter be sure."

"All right; give attention: The trouble began about a year ago, when gangs at work in Shaft No. 3 began to see ghosts there, as they said. One after another the men refused to work in that shaft, till at last it had to be abandoned."

"Ye don't tell!"

"That is just what I do tell. At last, when one man was found murdered there, with a peculiar mark on his forehead, the men absolutely refused to have anything to do with that shaft."

"Can't say as I blame 'em fer that."

"And yet you are ready to risk your life by going there."

"Well, et's different with me. I ain't got nuthin' better ter do, an' et's neck or nothin'."

"All right; you are old enough to know your mind, I take it. Want to hear any more about it?"

"I want to hear every word you kin tell me."

"Very well, attend: The man who was killed, as I mentioned, had a pard who was resolved upon avenging his death. He went down into the shaft for that purpose, and did not come out again."

"Got et ther same?"

"Yes, exactly. When a search party could be gotten together to go down and look for him they found him just where the other had been found, with the same kind of a mark on his forehead."

"Et ain't pleasant ter corntemplate, now, is et?"

"Decidedly not."

"Any more?"

"Yes; three others have met the same fate, till now it would be next to impossible to raise a search party if you went down there and failed to come up."

"Wull, now, et is goin' ter be somthin' of a desprut venture, same as you called et, old man," to Thompson.

"You had better think twice about undertaking it," was the warning.

"Oh, I am goin' to undertake it, hard enough, but thar is one thing I would like to have understood."

"What is that?"

"That if I don't put in my appearance in a given number of days that ye will make some sort of effort to find out what's ther matter with Hanner."

Thompson remained silent, leaving it for the manager to say.

"Well, yes; we'll do that," the manager spoke up, presently. "I suppose you had rather have decent burial than lie down there to rot."

"Yes, that's it."

"Then you refuse to be scared out, eh?"

"Don't know any sech word as that," the young man declared.

"What is your name?"

"Jim Jinks. But a name don't matter, when a feller has got down to my level. Now, is et a bargain, all understood?"

"It is all straight, sir, as far as I am concerned."

"If I solve the mystery I git ther thousand?"

"Positively you will, sir."

"'Nuff said, then. Now, one or two little p'int's that I want understood."

"Name them."

"You will keep it quiet about my bein' down thar?"

"If you want it so."

"I don't want a soul to know that I am undertakin' et. I know I kin rely on you two gents."

"You can rely upon me," said the manager.

"And me," from Thompson.

"Good enough. Then, I would like a little grub-stake to take along with me—I suppose you won't refuse a feller that?"

"You shall have it. Anything more?"

"If ye could fit me out with a bull's-eye lantern and a little can of oil——"

"You shall have both. Anything more?"

"No; et don't pay ter be a hog; that is enough. Then all I'll want will be ter have Shaft No. 3 p'inted out ter me, with directions how ter git down, and I'll watch my chance and sneak down unseen, ef I kin."

"Very well; you shall be supplied, and I shall be somewhat anxious to know how you fare."

"I'll let ye know, sir, soon as possible."

"You seem to speak as if confident that you will come out alive."

"Sa-ay——"

"Well, what is it?"

"Want to make a bet——"

"What have you got to put up? You have just admitted that you are dead broke."

"Dead broke! Me? Well, I reckon not. Ain't thar a thousand dollars comin' to me, soon's I have solved this hyer mystery? I reckon!"

"Ha, ha, ha! And you want to stake some of that?"

"I'll bet the thousand even that I do ther business."

"That is about the most peculiar thing I ever heard of. You have nothing at stake all around. If I lose, you get two thousand dollars; if I win, I get nothing."

"Nothin' at stake? Ain't my life at stake?"

"Oh, well, if you look at it that way; but you held that as worth nothing."

"Well, will ye do et?"

"Yes, I will. It may stimulate you to some great effort, and I begin to feel some confidence in you in spite of myself."

"'Nuff said, then. Now, ef I ain't on top in forty-eight hours, send along yer search party. Ef I am on top, et will be to claim that two thousand. So, fetch on ther grub-stake and lantern."

"I'll provide them at once. Mr. Thompson, do you mind remaining here a few minutes while I step out?"

"No, sir; go ahead."

The manager went out, and the detective turned at once and faced the young stranger.

"Can it be possible——" he began, but hesitated.

"That I am Diamond Dick, Jr.?"

"It is wonderful!"

"Nothing wonderful about it; merely a change of attire and a little reckless application of grime and dirt is all."

"Then you are fully resolved to make this daring venture?"

"Speaks for itself, don't it?"

"Well, yes. I wish you luck, my boy, but I am fearful. If years were more in my favor, I would like nothing better than to join you. As it is, I am debarred."

"Your place is here on top. Keep your eye on Galbraith and his men, for there is hardly a chance for a mistake in what we suspect."

"I agree with you in that. I'll watch him, never fear."

"And take care he don't get in a dig at you that you are not looking for. Remember your escape of last night."

"I am mindful of it—— That reminds me; how did you fare at the jail? I take it they were some of the rascals, and that they meant you no good."

"Merely wanted to present me with a necktie, that's all."

"The devils! But, just wait——"

The gesture was significant, and they had chance to say but little more before the manager returned.

In about half an hour a man brought a well-filled basket to the office of the company, and a little later on Diamond Dick, Jr., in disguise as a miner, stole his way to Shaft No. 3 and began the descent of the ladders.

## CHAPTER VI.

### A STILL-HUNT GAME—A COWARDLY SHOT.

"I'll be hanged if I understand it!" cried the marshal, bringing his fist down upon the library table.

"It is something that none of us can understand," said Judge Dolliver, with somewhat less force. "The mysteries here at Bullionville have only become more enigmatical."

"I have to admit it," spoke up Detective Thompson. The trio were in consultation in the library of Judge Dolliver's house. "The more I think of the queer business of last night, the more I am puzzled. I confess that I do not like the appearance of things."

"And that escape from the jail," said the marshal, returning to that incident for something like the tenth time, "the more I study it the more—Hello!"

The door had opened suddenly.

Unannounced, Pedro, the Mexican servant, who owed allegiance to Detective Thompson, entered the room.

He walked straight to his master, and extended a folded slip of paper to him.

With some surprise, the detective took it and opened it.

He gave a start as he read it.

"What have you there?" demanded the marshal, at once.

"More mystery?" asked the judge.

"One moment, gentlemen," said the detective. "Pedro, where did you get this?"

"A man on horseback gave it to me, senor."

"Where is he now?"

"He rode away at once, senor."

"Did you know him, Pedro?"

"He wore a half-mask, senor."

"Thunder!" cried the marshal.

"Why couldn't we have seen him?"

The door opened again, and Colonel Galbraith came into the room, and, seeing that something was amiss, asked:

"Hello! what now?"

He was promptly told.

"But the message, what is it?" urged the marshal.

"It is a warning and a threat," said the detective.

"Listen and I will read it."

And he read as follows:

DETECTIVE THOMPSON: Let this message be a warning to you and all concerned, if you would not share the fate of the prisoner

of last night. We are determined and desperate. Tell Judge Dolliver to drop it. Tell Colonel Galbraith to keep out. This warning will not be given a second time. COMMITTEE.

The men looked from one to another, inquiringly.

"It is too bad that the man who brought this was not caught," said Colonel Galbraith, the first to speak.

"Yes, decidedly," agreed the judge. "We might have been able to force something out of him. Then that young man must have been killed after they took him from the jail."

"It looks so," agreed the colonel.

"What would you do about it?" and the judge turned to the detective whom he had employed to sift the mystery of Shaft No. 3.

"That is for you to say, sir," was the quiet response. "If you say drop it, that will be my orders. But if it were my personal matter——"

He did not finish.

"What if it were your personal matter?" the judge insisted.

"I would push it to the bitter end. But, as it is your business, you must decide about that."

"That's me, too," here put in the marshal. "I would not give it up until I had a rope around their cussed necks, if it was me."

The judge turned to Galbraith.

"And you?" he asked.

"I think I have hinted before what I would do," was the response. "I would abandon Shaft No. 3 and let the mystery remain a mystery to the end of time, or until the natural course of events solved it."

"Why would you do that?" asked the detective.

"Because innocent lives are being sacrificed in the matter, and what is the use of it? The judge can well afford to abandon that shaft; the rest of the mine is rich enough without it."

"Then you hold the fellow innocent who was taken from the jail last night?"

For just a moment the colonel was floored.

"By thunder, no!" he cried. "I believe that he was one of this band, gang, or what you will. Perhaps the chief of them."

"That is rather inconsistent, it appears to me. If this message was from their clique, they give us to understand that the prisoner met his fate at their hands."

"Well—er—it is puzzling, I have to admit. There is one thing certain, however."

"And that is——?"

"That he came here upon a dastardly errand last night, and that only for me you would have suffered."

"I am not certain about that now, my dear colonel."

"Not certain?" with surprise.

"No, sir."

"Why?"

"I have been thinking that possibly you made a mistake."

"That I made a mistake? Why, sir, do you take me for a fool, that I do not know what my eyes behold?"

"Is there no possibility of a mistake?"

"None, sir!"

"Then you deny that there was a third man here, as the prisoner said?"

"Most emphatically."

"Very well; now attend me: My servant Pedro bore out the statement made by the young man in every respect."

"That! for a lying Mexican."

He snapped his fingers.

"Very well; set it down for naught. Now, among the men who went to take him out of the jail was one with his hands bandaged."

Colonel Galbraith started.

"How do you know that?" he demanded.

"Because I saw him."

"You saw him?"

"Yes, sir."

"What were you doing there, then?"

"That need not matter. Was not that the man who got his hands burned with the vitriol?"

"Why, how should I know, sir? I certainly was not out prying about the jail in the night."

The judge and the marshal were looking on and listening with keen interest.

"Well, don't you think it possible that it was?" the detective modified.

"If it was, it must have been a pal of his, that's all."

"Yet you denied emphatically that there was any third party, sir."

The detective's questions were sharp, and stung like darts, and Colonel Galbraith was nettled.

"See here!" he cried, suddenly. "Am I on the stand? Are you an attorney cross-examining me? What do you mean by all this business?"

"That is a good word, Colonel Galbraith, that word business; I rather like the sound of it; that is just what I mean by it, nothing more or less. You are my prisoner."

Had a bomb burst there in the room it could not have occasioned more consternation.

The colonel was on his feet instantly, as were also the judge and the marshal.

Galbraith was white to the lips, and his hand sought his hip.

"Take care!" warned the detective, bringing a revolver to bear upon his man, yet reclining in his chair coolly as he did so. "None of that!"

"But what do you mean? By Heavens, I will not submit to such indignity! Judge Dolliver, this in your house? It is an outrage, sir—an outrage! I denounce it as such!"

"Thompson, what does it mean?" interposed the judge.

"It means, sir, that this is a viper that you have taken to your bosom. That this is the scoundrel who would have burned my eyes out last night. That the prisoner was indeed Diamond Dick, Jr!"

"Impossible!"

"It is the fact, sir. Marshal, you will aid me in detaining the man. It is the fact, and I am now prepared to prove something of it against him. I had my suspicions concerning him, but they were not verified until last night."

"This is an outrage, an outrage!" stormed the colonel. "I will not submit to it!"

"I think you had better bring on your proofs," said the marshal.

"Yes, yes, the proofs," urged the judge.

"Very well, we will see if we can furnish proofs, then. Colonel Galbraith, sit down there and take it easy."

"I refuse, sir; I refuse to submit in any way whatever to your absurd dictation. Judge Dolliver, I hoped that you had found a man of sense when you employed Mr. Thompson."

"You will sit down, and at once!"

The detective now spoke with decision, and his revolver came up to a level.

"It is only because a weapon in the hands of a fool is a dangerous thing," growled the colonel.

He dropped upon a chair.

His lips were white, his face livid.

"Now you, marshal, you will search his pockets and see what you find. I feel sure of my ground."

"Judge Dolliver, must I submit to such indignity and in your house?"

"Thompson, are you not mistaken?"

"It remains to be seen. Marshal, will you do as I request?"

"I can't, sir. It is too much to accuse a gentleman like Colonel Galbraith of such——"

"By Heavens! do you leave me alone with the case? Judge Dolliver, when I engaged with you, I supposed that you meant business, and that you would have some confidence in me."

"Yes; but——"

"No 'but' about it! Will you search this man, or will you not?"

The mild manner of the detective was now gone, and something of the tiger of his nature was displayed.

He was well on in years, as we have shown, but he was a man whose reputation had been gained early in life, and well sustained through a long service of years.

"I can't do it," declared the marshal; "I am satisfied that you are making a mistake here."

"It must be so," agreed the judge. "Thompson,

it is my request that you drop the matter right here and let the gentleman go."

"You do not mean that, sir?"

"I do."

"Then you mean to drop the case?"

"No, sir; we will push on after that, in other lines, and at the same time clear up whatever you have against my friend."

"And let my reputation suffer? No, sir. Colonel Galbraith, I am going to search you—peacefully if you will have it so, but otherwise, if you force it. Put up your hands."

"And if I refuse?"

"You will oblige me to enforce the command."

"Then enforce it. I defy you. I am no coward, to be awed by your threats."

The decisive moment had arrived.

With a quick movement the detective was upon his feet, with his revolver presented at his prisoner's head.

There was "shoot" in his keen eyes.

As if the marshal feared he was going to put a bullet into the colonel at once, the marshal leaped forward and interfered.

He struck up the detective's arm.

This sudden movement made the weapon go off, and the bullet lodged in the ceiling.

At the same moment Colonel Galbraith whipped a gun from his hip pocket and fired a shot at the detective, the bullet just grazing his neck.

Believing that his shot had been fatal, and not stopping to see, the colonel made a dash for one of the windows leading to the piazza, shouting as he ran in that direction:

"He would have it, judge; you saw that it was in self-defense!"

The detective recovered from the momentary shock the shot had given him, and fired again.

But again the marshal knocked his arm and disturbed his aim, and the next moment Colonel Galbraith had cleared the window and was out of range, disappearing among the bushes of the garden.

The detective turned his weapon instantly upon the marshal.

"Hands up!" he thundered.

His manner was now so fierce that the marshal complied without a moment's delay.

"What more proof is needed that he is insane, judge?" the marshal cried.

"I am not half as insane as you would make me out to be," grated the detective, and, before the marshal half expected it, a pair of handcuffs were on his wrists.

"What do you mean by this?" he demanded.

"I mean what I said, that you are my prisoner. You would not have balked me as you did, had you not been in league with that man."

"You old fool! I did it to save bloodshed."

"Yes, of course you did; but there was no necessity for bloodshed had you aided me as an honest man would have done."

"Thompson, I must object," interposed the judge. "You are in my house, and that man was my guest. This man is our town marshal, and well known to me. I demand his release."

"We will first go to the room of your honored guest, sir," said the detective, sternly. "My reputation is at stake now, you see."

"What would you there?"

"Perhaps find some proof for the charges I have made. Lead the way, or you compel me to go alone."

In a dazed manner the judge led the way into the hall and upstairs, Thompson following with the handcuffed marshal, and the judge opened the door of a room.

They entered, and the detective cast a sweeping look around.

With an exclamation he crossed the room and stopped before a table on which lay pens and paper.

"Ha! I am in rich luck!" he cried. "Look here at this half sheet of paper, judge. Can you doubt it now? Wait, let me convince you."

So saying, he took from his pocket the note he had received a short time before and compared the edges of the two half sheets, where they had been torn, and they matched so unmistakably that all doubt was brushed away in an instant.

"You see," he cried, "this note was written here in this room, and by your guest, Colonel Galbraith."

"Can it be possible? Am I awake or dreaming?"

"I give in," said the marshal, meekly.

At that moment the detective, who had been standing near an open window, threw up his arms and fell, while the report of a pistol without came to their ears.

"Release me!" cried the marshal, struggling to free himself. "Find the key in his pocket and let me get after the one who fired that shot!"

The detective lay unconscious, and it looked as if he had been killed instantly.

The judge hastened to comply with the marshal's demand.

He fumbled for the key in the detective's pockets, but it was not readily found, and precious moments were slipping away.

The marshal had sprang to another window, where the shutters were partly closed, and was in time to see a little cloud of smoke floating away over the bushes.

Presently the key was found and the handcuffs were removed, when, jerking a revolver from his belt, the marshal darted out of the room and dashed down the stairs three steps at a time, and out into the garden, where he made search for some trace of the one who had fired the shot.

By the time he returned to the house the detective

had recovered consciousness and the judge was laying before him the proofs of the marshal's entire innocence. The detective was too badly knocked out to assent or protest, and asked to be put to bed, which was done, and at that stage of the game it looked as if villainy would win.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE DARING VENTURE—THE SKELETON GUARDIAN.

We must now follow Diamond Dick, Jr.

Before going to the haunted shaft, he had asked numerous questions, which we did not set down in detail.

It was to be a daring venture, as Detective Thompson had said of it, and it would not do for him to make it without some knowledge of the place into which he was going.

His questions brought much light upon the matter.

He knew the depth of the shaft, the number of chambers that opened to it, and which of these had been the fatal one.

It was the one to the north, gained by a tunnel from the shaft, and it was here that men had refused to enter, after what had happened there more than once.

Having reached the opening without having been seen, as he believed, Bertie began the descent of the ladders.

He went without a light to the first landing.

There he stopped and lighted his bull's-eye lantern, and roped his basket of provisions to his back.

This left his hands free for climbing or fighting, just as circumstances might require, for there was a hook on the lantern that could be slipped over his belt.

There was no call for him to be careful of his clothes, and as for his hands and face, they could not well have been dirtier.

The shaft had been for a long time unused.

There was a damp slime on the ladders that made it risky work, even with great caution.

And a fall down into that frightful depth meant death instantly. It was a daring venture in more respects than one.

The ladders were mostly in pairs, but sometimes three or even four would be found lashed together in one stretch, and all were ironed or chained to the walls.

Down, and still down, the daring adventurer went.

Occasionally there would be a slope, or "stoop," without a ladder, and there he would have to use great care while searching for the next series.

It was cold, dark, damp, and as silent as a tomb.

At last it seemed to Bertie as if he must be reaching the bottom, according to the description that had been given him.

About the time this thought came to him his foot missed a hold as he reached for another round of the ladder he was on, and he stopped instantly with a tight hold with his hands.

Taking the lantern from his belt, he flashed its rays downward.

There was the bottom, some forty feet below, and there on the hard floor lay the remaining ladders.

They had been removed from the stretch, in order, no doubt, to prevent any one from descending to the bottom of the shaft—something that spoke for human agency rather than spooks.

Bertie had to think for a moment.

"I guess it will reach," he said to himself. "At any rate it is the only chance, either that or go back, and that is not on the programme."

Securing himself to the ladder with a leg and an arm, he opened his ragged coat and proceeded to uncoil a rope that he had taken the precaution to bring along with him.

It was a slender rope, but strong and of good length.

When it had all been unwound, Bertie made one end secure to the ladder in order to run no risk of dropping it.

That done, he cast the rays of the lantern downward once more.

He found that the rope reached the bottom, with considerable to spare, and he was well pleased.

Securing the lamp and making ready, he began the descent.

With a couple of turns of the rope around one leg, it was an easy matter for one so athletic to make the passage safely.

In a brief time he was at the bottom.

Here he stopped to rest for a while, while he planned his further procedure.

There were two things that he did not like; he did not like the idea of leaving his rope there, for one thing.

He might need it again.

Then, in case he was forced to beat a hasty retreat, it would be a slow means of escape for him.

Could he not place the ladders back in position? It would be a pretty stiff task, but he felt that he would be equal to it—at any rate he would try it.

Putting down his basket in a safe place, he picked out the heavier of the two ladders and with some exertion managed to stand it against the wall. It was a heavy affair, enough for any two men to handle comfortably.

That done, he tied the end of the rope to the small end of the other ladder, and left it there and climbed the first ladder to the top.

There Bertie caught hold of the rope as it swung from above, and began to climb.

For one of his strength it was not much of a task.

He soon reached the end of the last of the series of ladders that hung suspended from above.

There he got a secure hold by getting behind the ladder and putting his body through, his feet braced upon one of the lower rounds.

In that position he began drawing up the other ladder by means of the rope, not an easy thing to do, but he was equal to it, and ere long he had the satisfaction of having the ladder in hand.

The chain was still hanging there by which it had formerly been coupled to the ladder on which Bertie was holding, and a little further effort enabled the intrepid youth to make the ladders fast together in about as secure a manner as they had probably been originally.

"There, how is that for a lone-hand job?" Bertie said to himself, as soon as it was done. "Most anybody would have been willing to bet that I couldn't have done it, no doubt, and I don't know but what I'd 'a' bet that way myself before I run it through my thinker and got hold of the plan. Now, then, for the ghosts, and the fellow with the marker."

He referred to the mysterious marks that had been found upon the foreheads of the men found dead there.

Untying the rope, he let it drop, and then descended.

Coming to the end of the ladder he had just chained in place, it was an easy reach to the one that was leaning against the wall, and he was soon on solid footing again.

There he coiled the rope around his body as it had been before, save that now he put it outside his coat instead of underneath.

Having so done, he picked up his basket and started northward.

He was now on forbidden ground.

Advancing slowly, he kept the light of the bull's-eye flashing ahead in order not to run into any unseen pitfalls.

Of a sudden he stopped short.

A distance ahead his quick eye had detected a reflection of light that had the appearance of having been turned back from a spider's slender thread.

Moving the bull's-eye from side to side and up and down, he soon proved that the reflection was from his own lantern.

He advanced yet more slowly, till he came to the place.

There, not greatly to his surprise—since it had occurred to him that it might be something of the sort—he found a slender wire across the passage.

"Good enough," he said to himself. "It begins to pan out nicely. If I had run up against this wire, no doubt I would have rang a signal bell somewhere hereabouts, and the ghost would have come forth to entertain me. All right, I'll reserve this for a while."

The wire was about two feet high from the ground.

In nine cases out of ten any one coming along the passage would have run into it before discovering it.

• Bertie stepped over it, and proceeded on his way, even more carefully than before, if possible.

Ere long he came to a place where two other wires were hanging.

One of these was about the same height above the ground as the first, the other being two feet and a half higher.

Diamond Dick, Jr., stopped here.

"Second sentinel, eh?" he observed to himself. "I wonder how long these things have been here? Must have been put here since the last searching party was down, or they would have been discovered."

He reflected further.

"That must be it," he said to himself. "When they took down the ladders they put up these wires, and no doubt it saves the trouble of keeping a sentinel here in the passage. Pretty good scheme, if it had only worked as intended. Wonder how much longer this passage is?"

He was in the tunnel leading from the shaft to the chamber.

Not a great distance further had he gone, having passed the wires in safety, when he came into a widened chamber.

The floor was level, the roof was high and arched, and numerous passages opened from the chamber in many directions.

"Well, so far and no ghosts," said Bertie in low tones. "But, then, I have not rung them up. If I should meet one of them unexpectedly I bet Mr. Ghost would get the worst scare, for I must look like the devil by this time."

He laughed to himself at the prospect.

At one end of the chamber a little stream of water was trickling down, forming a little pool where it fell, and then running off and away along the wall into one of the passages.

In this water Bertie washed his hands, and proceeded then to sample the contents of his basket.

He found it filled with fine edibles, and three bottles of wine.

Sitting down, he made a hearty meal, washing it down with some of the wine, and when he had done he felt ready for anything that might occur.

"Now, then, send on your ghosts," he invited. "Let the whole flock loose at once, so I'll know just what I have got to tackle. But I forgot; I have got to ring them up."

A grim smile lighted his face as a desperate resolution framed itself in his mind.

He would tamper with one of the wires.

Gathering up the fragments of his repast, he put them in the basket and carried the basket into one of

the smaller of the passages that led away from the main chamber.

That done, he unwound the rope from around his body.

He was ready.

Taking one end of the rope, he dragged it along into the passage leading to the shaft until he came to the place where the two wires were stretched.

Here he made the end of the rope fast to the lower one of the two wires, taking care not to disturb the wire yet, and leaving it there, went back the way he had come.

The other end of the rope lay in the big chamber.

Taking it up, Bertie gave it a savage jerk, and he had the satisfaction of feeling the wire break.

Not only so, but to his keen ears, from some distant part of the underground region, came the br-r-r-r of an electric bell, very faintly heard.

Bertie sprang quickly to cover in the passage in which he had placed his basket, drawing the rope in after him as fast as he could, hand over hand, and had just gathered in the last of it when he heard a sound.

It was a hideous, ghostly laugh, and the large chamber without was immediately filled with a strange, weird light.

Bertie was in a splendid position for watching.

There was a curve in the passage, only a yard or so back from its mouth.

Standing behind that, he could look over a projection and out into the main chamber and see all that was going on.

He knew at once that the light was of electric origin.

No doubt a glass of some tinted hue was used to give it the ghostly tinge it certainly possessed.

While Bertie watched, a weird, hideous laugh broke upon his ears, a clanging and jingling as of picks and shovels was heard, and half-a-dozen voices seemed to take up the ghostly refrain.

Diamond Dick, Jr., smiled to himself, and felt to make sure his guns were "in tune."

"I don't wonder superstitious miners were scared out of here," he said to himself. "They must have thought they had mined straight down into the hot place, I take it. Great Scott!"

No wonder he voiced the exclamation.

Out into the main chamber, from somewhere, came an actual skeleton, with a loose cape of white floating from its shoulders.

It carried a pick and shovel, and it ran forward and straight into the passage that led away to the shaft, the main tunnel out of the chamber, as we have stated.

The bones, white and gleaming, seemed to give off something of a phosphorescent flame as it moved.

It disappeared, and Bertie heard voices.

"Now, what the devil is to pay?"

"Some one has come down the shaft, of course."

"But how did he get down without a broken neck?"

"No way possible save by means of a rope."

"Then we'll have him, for he can't get up a rope fast enough to escape us. Come on!"

"Oh, yes, we have got him dead to rights, and there will be another mystery for them to puzzle over, if he has been sent here."

"If they can find men willing to come in search of him, eh?"

"That's it. You'll hear a howl when he sights the skeleton. He will be frightened into seventeen kinds of fits; ha, ha, ha!"

They crossed the chamber and entered the tunnel after the skeleton, and as soon as they had disappeared Bertie came cautiously forth from his place of concealment.

He looked quickly around.

At one end of the chamber, between two of the mentioned passages, was now an open space.

It was from this that the light was streaming, and Bertie looked carefully to see if any one was there.

He could see no one.

Dodging back, he caught up his rope and basket, and, with a gun in hand, reappeared and ran forward and into the place whence the light shone.

There he found a stone door, the outer surface of which was the rough rock of the chamber wall.

It might have escaped notice forever, from the outside.

Inside it was found hinged, and the hinges so massive and well oiled that it could move noiselessly.

The temptation came to Bertie to close the door and imprison the two men and the skeleton in the haunted shaft chambers, but a moment's reflection deterred him.

To do that would be to reveal his presence beyond the secret door, and with the signal wires they could no doubt summon further assistance.

He decided against the idea, and looked around for a place in which to conceal himself.

There did not appear to be any such place anywhere in sight.

Yet presently he found it.

Looking up, he saw a ledge, about twice as high as a man's head from the floor, and which seemed to have considerable top surface.

Two or three shoulders of rock jutted out at the edge of it, and one of these a little higher than the others was an inviting point at which to cast a rope for support.

Bertie's basket was down at once, and his rope in hand.

With a careful throw he put a loop over the projection, and a pull on the rope satisfied him of its solidity.

Swinging the basket on his back, as he had carried

it before, he began to climb, and in a few minutes was safe on top of the shelf, which he found was roomy enough to contain him comfortably.

He sat down and drew in the rope, reflecting upon his adventures as he did so.

"Well, it couldn't have worked better, so far," he mused. "It seems to me they were a little careless about the way they left the trail clear like they did."

But as he reflected further he saw that there had not been time between the pulling of the wire and the appearing of the men into the chamber for a person to have proceeded from the point where the wires hung to the main chamber. It was quite reasonable for them to expect to find the man still near the place where the wire had caught him.

For some minutes nothing was heard, and then came the voices of the two men as they were returning to the secret chamber from which they had emerged.

Bertie maintained silence and waited patiently for them to make their reappearance.

He had not a great while to wait.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### A CLEVER RUSE—LEADING A BOWER.

The men soon came into sight, and Bertie noted that they were bringing their skeleton with them.

He noticed something else for the first time, then, and that was that the skeleton had been run out by means of a trolley wheel and wire.

The wire was stretched from a point on the chamber wall, and extended, of course, across and down into the tunnel that led away to the shaft, and the skeleton ran by gravity.

"Now, then, I would like to know what it means," said one of the two fellows, as they lifted the skeleton from the wire and carried it within the secret chamber.

"Yes, and we must know," said the other. "Just signal up some more of the boys, and we'll make a search."

The skeleton disposed of, one of the men pulled a wire.

A bell was heard far away.

"What baffles me," said the first speaker, "is how the fellow got past the first wire and sprung one of the second pair."

"Must be that he saw the first one, and didn't see ther next ones; I don't see no other way. It is certain enough that he didn't come from this side first."

"No, for he couldn't get here."

"Well, here come ther boys."

Five other men came running along the passage to the point where the two were waiting.

"What's ther rumpus?" one of the five demanded.

"Ther deuce is ter pay."

"What is et?"

"We can't find ther cuss that sprung the 'larm."

"Yer can't?"

"Not a hair of him. We have got to make a search of Shaft No. 3."

"All right, and ef he is in thar he won't git out, you kin bet your boots."

"But how could he git in, with a whole neck?" another demanded.

"Give et up. We have got to find that out, and the sooner we are about it the better."

"Will ye close up ther shop?"

"You mean this door?"

"Yes."

"What do ye think about et?"

"I think it would be better to leave et open, and leave ther skeleton standin' hyer on guard."

"Well, maybe you are right. Tie the skeleton up there, and the rest of you light your torches and make ready for the search through the mine."

"Kerrect."

They talked on, while some arranged the skeleton and others prepared torches for their excursion.

"Thur, now, we aire ready," spoke up one rough fellow.

"Then come along, and if anybody comes this way while we are gone the skeleton will scare him into seventeen fits at once."

They laughed in a coarse way, and followed their leader out into the large chamber, and Diamond Dick, Jr., soon heard their voices die away in the distance.

"It seems to me that the brains of this concern can't be on hand here to-day," Bertie remarked to himself. "If he had been, he would have left a man or two here to guard this opening. How do they know but that the man they are looking for is lurking in one of the passages near by? What's more, how do they know that he hasn't already passed the forbidden portal?"

Bertie then considered what he should do himself. He soon made up his mind.

He would go down and see if he could not close and secure the stone doors, thus locking the seven fellows out in Shaft No. 3.

"That's a good thought," he said to himself. "That will add another mystery to the shaft series, and this time it will be one for the other side of the combination."

Looping his rope over the projection of stone, he quickly let himself down.

A couple of strides carried him to the doors.

He made a hasty examination of them and saw how they were to be shut and secured.

It was but the work of a few moments to perform the trick, and he felt satisfied that he had reduced by seven the foes against whom he would have to contend.

That was, for the present.

He knew, of course, that they could ascend the ladders from the shaft.

By this means they could give the alarm that an enemy was in the camp, and perhaps they could return with a strong force to make sure of his capture.

At that thought he hesitated about carrying out his plan.

But he decided to let it stand, for, while they were getting out of Shaft No. 3 and around to their secret rendezvous again, he could be making progress in some other direction.

He was about to turn away when he heard voices.

Then came the sound of running footsteps, and the next moment loud and fierce curses broke upon his ears in a muffled way.

Some one threw himself against the rock door, as Bertie felt, having his hand upon them at the moment, but he might as well have tried to move the mountain above.

"Cheated, by thunder!"

"Why didn't we lunks think of this?"

"One of us orter stayed hyer on guard."

"That's what's the matter. But, jist like Mose, to think of a think when et's too late."

"And now what will ther boss say?"

"Ther deuce only knows. Holler fer the rest of 'em, shoot yer guns, do somethin' to fetch 'em hyer!"

Three or four pistol shots were heard in rapid succession.

"That orter fetch 'em."

"Et will, I reckon. Great guns! but thar will be brimstone to pay hyer, and no pitch hot."

"Bet yer life."

"Wonder who et kin be?"

"Et must be that feller they told us about."

"Diamond Dick, Jr.?"

"Ther same."

"Well, they do tell that he is all hot on wheels, no mistake. Don't ye think et would pay us to take a quiet sneak?"

"No, et wouldn't. Might as well face Diamond Dick, Jr., ef it is him, as ter face ther boss when he gits his back up. 'Sides, he would think we had a hand in et."

"Wull, mebbly you aire right. Hyer they come!"

Other running steps were heard, and soon other voices rang out in the chamber.

In spite of the closed doors, Bertie could hear all that was said.

Perhaps the place had been so arranged purposely. That was of no moment.

"Where is he? Did ye kill ther galoot?"

"No; we didn't kill him, Mose; we ain't found him. Reason why, he has got in hyer and shut ther doors."

"Thunder and lightning! Didn't you fellows shut the doors? Can't ye git 'em open?"

"We didn't shut 'em, and ye can't git 'em open, nary."

"Blazes!"

Bertie felt another fierce but silent shock against the doors, as he stood with a hand still upon them.

"This hyer is a fine state of things, this is!" cried the one called Mose. "We wur durn fools ter leave ther place open and with nobody hyer. Why didn't some of ye think 'bout et?"

"Why didn't you? You wur in charge."

"Well, ther jig is up, now, and the best thing we kin do is ter git out of hyer and save our necks. There must be three or four of 'em, at least."

"How d'ye know that?"

"Why, ther ladders is up in place again, and no one man could do that trick alone."

"That's so. But, hang et, we dars'n't go up ther shaft in daylight; that would be a bad give-away fer us. We have got ter wait till night."

"And by that time be cornered hyer like rats in a trap."

"Et looks like we're all of that now."

"Well, come on, we have got to be doin' somethin'; ther jig is up hyer, now."

Bertie heard them move away, muttering and cursing among themselves, and he set his face in the opposite direction.

The electric light that had sent its ghostly glare out into the big chamber was still blazing, and Bertie looked to find the means for turning it off.

Near the base of the lamp he discovered a rubber handle.

He turned it.

The light was gone instantly, and he produced it again by turning the switch back to its first position.

Shutting it off, and satisfied that he could produce it again if he had occasion to do so, he turned the slide of his bull's-eye and flashed its light along the tunnel.

The whole place seemed to be deserted now.

Pulling down his rope from the projection above, he wound it around his body.

It had served him so well thus far, that he could not think of leaving it behind. It might come into play nicely somewhere else. His basket, however, he left on the shelf.

He would know where to find it, if needed.

Flashing the light ahead of him, he proceeded along the passage.

Presently the ringing of a bell claimed his notice. It was a small bell, and reminded him of a telephone signal.

It became louder as he advanced.

Presently there was a glare of light ahead, and in another moment the daring adventurer came out into a lighted chamber.

He had taken the precaution to take a survey be-

fore advancing boldly, in order not to run into an open trap.

But he saw no one, and evidently he had the whole place to himself, for the time.

The bell was still ringing, and Bertie saw that it was indeed attached to a telephone, and he strode forward to it.

Taking up the tube and placing it to his ear, he rang the responsive signal in a most emphatic manner.

"Who is that?" came the call at once.

"Et's me—Mose," answered Bertie, imitating that worthy's voice as nearly as might be.

"Well, it's a wonder you wouldn't answer up, and not keep me ringing here all day. You want to have your eyes peeled for Shaft No. 3."

"That's where I have been," answered Bertie. "Thar's the devil to pay in Shaft No. 3."

"Did you catch him?"

"Ketch who?"

"The man—we think it's Diamond Dick, Jr."

"No, and what's more, we can't find him. He is too many fer us down hyer."

"You're a fool! You are six to one at least, or ought to be, and you say one man is too many for you. I want you to catch him; understand?"

"Aire ye sure thar is only one?"

"Yes, I'm sure; he was seen to go down, but I didn't find it out till ten minutes ago."

"Well, then he has started up again, I reckon, fer the ladders aire all back in place, and that made me think thar must be more'n one man."

"Ladders in place?"

"Yes."

"That's strange, if only one went down."

"I think you had better come down hyer, boss, and lead ther business yerself."

"Yes, I will, as soon as I can get there. Meantime, keep a sharp watch, and if you get him finish him off and give him the mark."

"You bet. Ther boys aire lookin' fer him."

"That's right."

"But, say, boss."

"Well?"

"Ef I was you, I would send somebody to fix them ladders. Let somebody sneak up thar and 'splode a cartridge under the top one, and that will shut ther cuss in ther trap, ef he is still down hyer."

"That's a good thought, Mose; I didn't think you were equal to it. Yes, I will see to the ladders, if not that way, then some other. And then I will be right down there to lend a hand. We have got to have that chap and make a fine example of him."

Bertie hung up the tube, and there was a grin on his face.

"Yes, come down, and I will make it pleasant for you, Colonel Galbraith, bet your life!"

Bertie had recognized the voice during their talk.

He now looked around the place in which he found himself, giving it some study.

It was not the first time he had seen a counterfeiter's den, but he had never before seen one half as complete in all its appointments.

Here was everything that a first-class engraving establishment would require, and the whole business could be carried on in one room, from the start to the finish.

Here was power, a dynamo was running, fine electric lights were blazing, and it was plain that the men had dropped their work to answer the call that the fellow "Mose" had made for them.

"This is rich, this is," said Bertie. "How it will delight the heart of Thompson. He called it a desperate venture, and so it was, but it has panned out better than I dared to hope it could. I'm on top yet."

"You're a liar! Up with your hands!"

Bertie felt the cold tube of a revolver behind his ear, and he knew that the least show of resistance on the instant would signal his death.

Diamond Dick, Jr., was a youth of steel nerves that had been case-hardened, so to say, in the crucible of experience, and he did not flinch outwardly, great as was his surprise.

"Certainly, anything to oblige," he said, in the most matter-of-fact way imaginable, and he held up his hands and turned leisurely.

A heavy hand had fallen upon his shoulder.

As he turned he saw that he was in the hands of Marshal Maguire, the man who had put him in jail on the previous night, and here was proof conclusive as to which side he was on.

"Yes, you are on top—nit!" the marshal exclaimed. "I don't know how you got here, and I don't care a darn now; you will never get out again. I would shoot you where you stand, but will wait for the colonel. At the least move, though, out goes your light."

"You seem to have it all your own way," said Bertie, meekly. "Anyhow, I am glad to see you in your true light, marshal."

"No matter what light you see me in, you will never see daylight again!"

Bertie had a different opinion about that.

He allowed his eyes to go suddenly beyond the marshal, and ducked his head, as if expecting a blow.

It was the old, old trick, but again it was successful, for the marshal was taken off his guard for just an instant, and glanced in the same direction.

Instantly Bertie brought his bull's-eye lantern down into the man's face with all the force of his arm, at the same time knocking his weapon aside, and threw himself upon the marshal with fury.

Down they went together to the floor.

The blow had half blinded and half stunned the marshal, and Bertie had an easy victory.

He rose up presently, and the marshal was left lying on his back, with a pair of handcuffs adorning his wrists.

"Yes, I am still on top, and you are the liar," Bertie said to him.

"Curse you! you'll see, yet!"

"You bet!"

"You will never get out of here alive!"

"Do you want to wager something on that? I'm open for a bet, if you like."

"And you can bet your life on it. I don't know how you got in, but I do know that you can't find the way out, and as soon as the captain and the boys come your doom is sealed!"

Bertie laughed.

"Why, I have already taken care of the boys," he declared. "It was even easier to take care of them than it was of you. And now the whole game is in my hands. Don't you wish you were on the other side now?"

"Curse you! you'll see! you'll see!"

"Ha! ha!"

## CHAPTER IX.

### A GAME OF GRIT—BERTIE WINS ALL.

Bertie was elated with his success.

Yet it did not make him unmindful that he was still in a desperate situation.

His daring venture was by no means terminated, and the tables might be turned before he got out of the woods, if he was not mindful.

Once let these desperate men get him in their hands, and he would not stand the ghost of a chance for his life, but would make them another victim for their peculiar brand.

While bantering with the marshal, yet he weighed what the man said in retort.

The statement that he could not find his way out was probably not without a good foundation, but Bertie had a different opinion, nevertheless.

There was one thing that must be done, and he must not neglect it.

That was to gag his prisoner.

If he left him as he was he would be able to shout a warning to Colonel Galbraith when he heard him coming.

He began preparing a gag at once, and while he was so engaged he remarked, as if he meant it:

"Maybe it would be worth something for me to allow you to escape, marshal."

"Curse you! you'll never hinder it, unless you murder me."

"Oh, yes, I will, too."

"I tell you you can't. You can't get out; but the captain will soon be here with help, and then you'll find yourself in a fix."

"Meantime, what's to hinder me from dragging

you into a passage where they'll never think to look for you, and leaving you there to die of starvation? I don't say I will, though."

"I defy you! Do what you please with me."

"Can we come to terms?"

"No."

"Can't I induce you to tell me the way out?"

"Not on your life, curse you! The worst you can do is kill me, and, by Heavens, I'll die game!"

"Then it remains for me to gag you."

"You don't mean to do that?"

"Well, bet your life I do, then. I don't mean to allow you to chip in a warning word to the next man who comes along, if I know it."

The marshal let out a yell that awoke the echoes of the place.

Bertie gave him a kick.

Catching hold of his head, Bertie soon made him glad to open his jaws, and the gag was forced in and bound securely in place.

"There, now, see how much yauping you can do," said Bertie.

The marshal made a sound with his throat that could be taken for a curse, as no doubt it was.

Bertie's next move was to bind his feet together with a piece of rope, and, having done that, he dragged the prisoner back a way into the tunnel and left him there.

When he returned again to the chamber he heard voices.

They were near at hand. The electric lights were still in full glow, and the place was as light as day.

Diamond Dick, Jr., looked around for the means of shutting them off, but before he could find it he heard heavy feet descending stone stairs.

The next moment a portion of the rock wall of the room opened, and some men made their appearance.

Bertie ducked behind one of the presses just in time not to be seen.

There were four of the men.

The leader wore an oilskin coat and a mask, but Bertie felt sure of his identity none the less.

He believed it to be Colonel Galbraith.

Behind him came a man with both hands done up in rags, and behind him the other two.

As the last man of them passed through into the chamber, the opening closed in an automatic manner, as it appeared, and nothing remained but a straight line, or seam.

The leader looked around.

"Hello, Mose!"

So he shouted, and awaited an answer, but none came.

He called again, and several times, but with the result the same, and he let fall an oath.

"What has gone wrong here, anyhow?" he thundered.

"I be darn if I know," said his man Luke.

"But, we have got to know. It must be that they are still hunting for that infernal weasel. Come on!"

"Steady!"

Bertie popped up from behind the press, with a gun in each hand.

He had taken in the situation carefully, and had decided that he might as well open the ball.

And it would be better to do it while he had his men bunched than to wait till they were scattered, when their chance would be better.

"Blazes!" cried the four.

"That's what it will be if you do not put up your hands this instant and keep them up!" Bertie added. "It will be blazes and hot shot together!"

"Curse you! how came you here?"

"I walked right in, the same as you did," said Bertie.

They had lifted their hands as ordered, and it looked as if the whole combination was in Bertie's grasp.

The lights went out like a wink, and the place was plunged in darkness.

Diamond Dick, Jr., leaped aside from the place where he had been standing, instantly, and lucky that he did so.

He had only just done so when a volley of pistol shots rang out and bullets went hurling against the wall in the exact spot where our hero had been standing.

The bull's-eye lantern had been broken by the force of the blow Bertie had struck the marshal.

Hence he was without a light, or ready means of making one.

Nor did he shoot at once.

He knew the men would be on the alert for the flash of his gun, and that their volley would probably find him the next time.

"Show yourself!" thundered the captain of the counterfeiters, as if it were possible to show anything in that blackness. "Give up, curse you, or we will skin you alive!"

Bertie remained silent.

He was thinking rapidly, trying to get a scheme to circumvent them.

At last a thought came to him, and he proceeded to put it into practice without delay.

He had brought an extra supply of weapons with

him, a pair of revolvers besides his own brace of favorites.

While the men were cursing and shouting for him to make some sign to show where he was, trying to taunt him into doing so, Bertie was feeling for a place to lodge the extra weapons.

He found it in the framework of the press behind which he had taken shelter.

It took him but a few moments to fix them.

He had run the end of the rope through the trigger-guards, and he now crept some yards away.

Getting his own pair ready in hand, he gave a jerk of the rope with his foot, and two flashes and two reports were the instant result.

Instantly came the expected result.

There was a volley, and the bullets went in that direction to find him.

But that was not all.

Even as that volley was being fired, Bertie's poppers spoke out and a couple of groans were the result.

Again Bertie changed his position quickly, before further firing could take place in his real direction, but no more shots were fired immediately.

"Curse it!" grated one of the men. "Thar's more'n one of 'em!"

"And no tellin' how many!"

"Will you surrender?" cried Bertie.

An instant shot was his response, and lucky for him that he was behind a sheltering object.

It had been a direct snap in the direction of his voice, and the aim not by any means bad, as the impinge of the bullet told.

Bertie gave as quick a rejoinder with his gun, and with better result. He fired at the spot where the flash had appeared, and the shot brought forth a howl of pain.

He heard a weapon fall to the floor with a clang.

"Will you surrender?" Bertie called out again. "If not, we'll blow you to pieces!"

"Yes, yes, we cave!" one of the fellows cried.

"Never!" came another voice, the voice of Colonel Galbraith. "We will never surrender!"

As he finished speaking he blew a shrill whistle signal, evidently to summon the rest of his force to his assistance.

"It is useless for you to call for help," said Bertie. "We have got all the rest of your men all right.

Mose and his fellows are secured, and Marshal Maguire is here, bound and gagged."

"Curse you, you lie!"

"On the contrary, it is the most stubborn truth you ever ran up against in your life, Colonel Galbraith."

At mention of the name there was a muttered oath, and another pistol shot was fired, the bullet coming straight at Bertie, but imbedding itself in the object behind which Bertie was taking shelter.

At that instant somebody sprang upon Bertie, dark as it was, and bore him to the floor.

"Quick, captain! This way!"

Diamond Dick, Jr., knew that it was life or death, and that his own prowess must decide.

"Have you got him?" called Colonel Galbraith.

"Yes, yes!"

Instantly the place was flooded with light again, and Bertie was enabled to see his antagonist.

It was the fellow whom we have known as Bill.

He was a powerful man, and Bertie saw that he would have to exert himself to the last degree.

With a tremendous effort, Bertie turned him and brought him under, his back on the floor, at the same instant that Colonel Galbraith came around to that side of the room.

The colonel's right arm was swinging helpless, but in his left hand he had a pistol.

He raised it and fired quickly.

The bullet just grazed Bertie, and the fellow with whom he was grappling let go his hold instantly with a moan.

The bullet had found the wrong man.

Bertie rolled over like lightning, just escaping another shot, and grabbing Colonel Galbraith by a leg, brought him to the floor with a thud.

In an instant he was on top of him, with a gun at his temple, and as he held him thus he looked around to see where the other two fellows were, and what they were up to.

They were not to be seen.

Bertie did not dally, but, striking Galbraith a blow that rendered him insensible, he sprang up and darted into the tunnel.

There he came upon Luke and the other fellow in the act of releasing Marshal Maguire, and a sharp command from Bertie caused them to desist, and throw up their hands. In a brief time, Bertie had them all bound, and the victory was his completely.

But how to get out of there?

He went to the place where he knew the opening was, but he could discover no means of opening it.

It would hardly do for him to risk going back the other way, for he would have seven to contend against in that direction, and to open the door into the chamber might be to change the whole situation.

Besides, he believed that Galbraith had taken steps for the destruction of the ladders at the top of the shaft.

There was a way out, he was well assured of that, and he must find it.

But the search of an hour failed to reveal it to him.

Colonel Galbraith had now come to.

"You see, you are a prisoner anyhow," he said to his captor. "You can never get out of here without our help."

"Then, I suppose I'll never get out of here, eh?"

"Well, it will rest with you as to that."

"What do you mean?"

"Agree to let us off, and I'll let you out of here—that is to say, you let us go and give us a time start, and I'll send you word by telephone how to get yourself out."

"Nit," said Bertie. "I'm too old a bird to be caught by chaff. I can stand the racket as long as you can, I guess."

"Don't you know that help will come soon?"

"I know that I'll get help if I am not on top in forty-eight hours from the time I came down."

"I mean help for our side, though."

"No; not aware of it."

"Well, it's so. But who do you think is going to aid you?"

"I have it all arranged with Detective Thompson——"

"Ha, ha! Don't happen to know that he is flat on his back with a bullet in him, I guess?"

This was news for Bertie, and he was half-inclined to discredit the statement. But, even if true, he could still rely upon Judge Dolliver, provided he could get men willing to make the search.

"I thought that would floor you," said Galbraith. "Curse you! my will is good to rip your heart out, but fortune has favored you, and I am in a fix where I am forced to make terms with you. Are you open to a fair proposition? If so, I'll make one."

"Let's hear it."

"At midnight I will lead you out of here and out to the top. There you release me, and give me two hours and a half to get away in, and you can do what you please with the rest of the gang."

"I scorn your offer," said Bertie. "It shows the cowardly vileness of your black heart. For your own safety you would sacrifice all the men who have served you. No, sir! I had rather let every one of the others go, if need be, and hold fast to you. But we'll fight it out on this line for a while."

It was one iron will against another.

Hours passed, and Bertie's watch told him that it was night without.

He was hungry, and, making sure that his prisoners were secure, he went and brought his basket of provisions.

Sitting down where the others could see him, he ate and drank heartily in their presence, which must have made their mouths water, but still the captain of the counterfeiterers was obdurate.

The night passed, and the morning came.

By that time Colonel Galbraith was faint from hunger and loss of blood, but still he held out.

Bertie had spent hours trying to find the means of opening the passage, but without success. He now sat down and made another meal from the basket, in a taunting manner.

"I can stand it longer than you can, old man," he said, cheerfully. "You had better cave."

"Never!" grated the prisoner. "Better death here than a life sentence."

"Ef he won't tell, I will," said a voice, and, to Bertie's surprise, the man named Bill staggered to his feet.

Bertie had supposed him dead, as he had all the others. He had been unconscious all night, but now recovering, life was still dear to him.

"All right," Bertie accepted. "You lead the way out of here and I will recommend you to leniency, for you have had a pretty good share of punishment as it is."

"I'll do et on one 'dition," said Bill.

"No condition at all," declared Bertie. "You know that your life depends on it, so lead the way."

Colonel Galbraith raved and stormed, but all to no purpose, for Bill was determined to save his own neck if possible, and he touched a hidden electric button that opened the doors.

Bertie had him show him also how to open the

doors from the other side, and, making sure that his prisoners could not possibly escape during his absence, he followed the man out and assisted him in getting medical attendance on their reaching the top.

Diamond Dick, Jr., next resumed his proper attire. After a good wash-up, and that done, he called upon Judge Dolliver and Detective Thompson, whom he found in bed, as Colonel Galbraith had declared him to be. Thompson was amazed to see him, for he felt certain that he had met his death. An explosion had taken place at Shaft No. 3 the previous day, destroying many of the ladders and sending tons of debris down into the shaft.

Bertie told his story to eager listeners, and a party was made up to go down and bring up the prisoners already secured, and secure the others who were at large in the chambers of Shaft No. 3; all of which was successfully accomplished.

Bertie was given a great ovation by the miners of the Dolliver Mine, some of whose comrades had met their fate in Shaft No. 3, and he had much trouble trying to prevent them from lynching Colonel Galbraith and the rascally marshal, as well as the others concerned. He managed to do so, however, and the prisoners were given their just deserts.

Bertie insisted that Thompson should be the one to claim the reward for breaking up the counterfeiting gang, but Thompson was reluctant about doing so; at last he consented, with the understanding that Bertie would accept a share of it. And on that agreement they stood. Bertie also got his two thousand dollars. It had been a daring venture, indeed, but a most successful one. Much capital had been back of the scheme, and the rascals had been two or three years in getting things working to their satisfaction. At first there was some suspicion that Judge Dolliver himself was concerned in it, but it was proven conclusively that he had been made a dupe of by the more brainy Galbraith. Needless to say, it was cleaned out, and mining operations were resumed in the now famous Shaft No. 3.

THE END.

Next week's issue (No. 304) will contain "Diamond Dick, Jr.'s, Rescue; or, The Shot at Pan-Out Pass." A rattling story, boys, full of snap and incident from start to close, and with a hot finish that bound to stir the blood of any boy who reads it.



These amateur journalists are great boys. There is little that misses them in the way of interesting happenings, and they can't be beat for the way they write them up.

Of course, you are one of them.

If you are not, just look on the next page, see the prizes we offer and how easy it is to get a prize, and you'll become an amateur journalist mighty quick.

### An Adventure On Lake Chelan.

(By Eugene Martin, Wash.)

Hans was a boy of German parentage, thirteen years old. He lived with his father and mother on a small fruit farm. They owned a large Newfoundland dog, Crusoe, who twice a week was driven to town by Hans. Hans had some beaver traps on the other side of the lake, and two or three times a week Hans went across the lake and brought home his catch.

One day when Hans was about a quarter of a mile from shore a squall suddenly came up and capsized the canoe. As Crusoe was along and it is a Newfoundland's instinct to save lives, there was no danger of Hans drowning. As he could not swim in such a sea, Crusoe quickly rushed for him. Hans thought that the dog meant to save his own life, so Hans fought with feet and hands to keep him off. Their struggles brought them nearer and nearer the shore; but when they were about one hundred yards from shore Hans was so exhausted that Crusoe got hold of his coat collar and swam with him to shore. There the faithful dog guarded him until Hans' father came and rescued them. Crusoe dined on the fat of the land that night, I can promise you.

### Riding a Steer.

(By Howard Flury, Mo.)

The day was a very hot one, such as was the rule during last summer's drought, and large clouds were driving one another across the sky, where a herdsman and myself were seated under the boughs of a large oak tree, watching a large herd of cattle. It was my third day on the farm, and I was eager to become familiar with everything.

The herdsman, whose name was Hiram, was telling me of an old cow which could be ridden.

Of course, I was eager to mount this peculiar steed, and I proceeded to do so when it was pointed out to me. After I was seated upon her bony back she turned her head around and seeing I was a stranger started on a run through the herd. After having had my legs hurt I tried

to stand up, but my feet slipped off of the cow's back to their old place. This would not do. I said to myself, "I will have to get on a cow with a broader back." Acting on this thought, I waited till my steed went past me. Just then she ran past a broad-backed steer. In an ungraceful manner I jumped to his back. He became enraged instantly and started on a wild race for the pond, where he jumped in. I jumped off in an effort to get to shore, but as soon as I was off his back he turned and pursued me. I swam hard, but I would have felt his horns if the herdsman had not ridden to the pond and thrown me a rope. When I got out of the water I imagined that I was being pursued by steers from all directions, but this soon passed away, and after I had gotten some dry clothes on I was ready for any other adventure that might come along.

### Frank's Adventure.

(By John Rogers, N. J.)

Just as dusk was settling upon a wild landscape, the pale light transforming every object into a weird and unnatural shadow, a youth came forth, one hand leading a dark, chestnut mare, the other carrying a fine Winchester, breach-loading rifle.

He was dressed in a light suit of tanned buckskin, and his belt carried a bowie and pistol. His general appearance indicated the typical hunter.

But, hark! from the deep shades of the forest comes a cry like that of a child. The horse shies, and pricking up his ears, stands erect, every hair bristling. The boy also stops, and into his keen blue eyes comes a look of determination which cannot be mistaken. His hand grasps his rifle tighter, and he full-cocks his piece. Carefully he ties his horse to a sapling and prepares for a struggle. He is just in time, for a tawny form springs toward him.

He has scarcely time to fire one shot, which diverts the panther—for such it is—from its course. But for this the boy must have been ultimately crushed beneath those ponderous paws. The panther, however, quickly recovers itself, and again springs toward the boy. But

his hand has clutched his bowie, and he steps aside. The unerring knife strikes the panther full in the breast. With a cry half-human, half-savage, he rolls over. But he is game and again he starts forth, his eye-balls glaring like living balls of fire.

Now the trusty rifle comes into play and a shot echoes through the forest, which stills the heart in the breast of the savage beast.

Before the sun crept over the misty mountains in the early morn Frank's admiring friends followed him to the scene of the combat, and in triumph they bear the creature's skin homeward, where it now hangs in Frank's room, a memento to his prowess as a hunter.

### An Adventure With a Wild Bull.

(By A. Jenkins, Ga.)

"Boys, let's have a little fun." The speaker was in a hotel in Georgia. His name was Fred. Around the room were sitting a group of boys about his age.

"How will we have the fun?" one asked.

"Yes, tell us," said another.

"Spit it out," said the third.

"Well, boys," said Fred, "you all know Bob Baur's pasture."

"We certainly do."

"Well, boys, there's a swimming pool in the back of the pasture. How about going over and taking a bath."

"Shure! shure! shure!" they all cried.

The preparations were all made, and they started. They were destined to have some thrilling adventures. They were going along chatting when one of the youngest said:

"Look! look! What a pretty dog!"

"Climb a tree," said Fred; "'tis a mad dog!"

They all made for and climbed a tree. Fred, who was more unfortunate than the others, stepped upon a rotten limb. The limb broke and down came poor Fred.

"My God! he will be bitten," they all cried. But he was not for he had not been hurt by the fall, he being close to the ground. Picking up a stick as the dog sprang at him he brought it with a crash upon its head. That saved Fred's life.

The stick happening to hit it just behind its ear stiffened the dog out upon the ground dead.

"Well, boys, we're here!" It was our same company of heroes. They were at their destination.

"Pull off, boys!" cried Fred. All of the fellows had pulled off except Fred, who was in his shirt sleeves, when suddenly there came a loud bellowing. Fred had on a red shirt. The bull saw it and made a dive for him, for it was a bull that made the noise. Fred broke into a run. On came the bull in a mad dash after him. It was a race for life, but Fred won.

It was in a room at Fred's home. Fred was unconscious in bed.

Just then Fred opened his eyes.

"Where am I?" he asked.

"At home, my child," answered his mother, stooping over and kissing him.

"Oh, mother!" he said, "I will never forget my adventure with the wild bull."

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### HERE ARE FULL DIRECTIONS:

Take any incident you can think of. It may be a fire, a runaway, an accident, an adventure, or even a murder. It doesn't matter whether you were there or not. Write it up as graphically as you can, make it full of "action," and send it to us. The article should not be over 500 words in length. **The Contest closes September 1st.** Send in your stories at once, boys. All the best ones will be published during the progress of the contest. Remember, whether your story wins a prize or not, it stands a good chance of being published, together with your name.

Cut out the accompanying Coupon, and send it, with your story, to the DIAMOND DICK WEEKLY, Care of STREET & SMITH, 238 William Street, New York.

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### COUPON

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## THE LIFE RAFT.

By CLEW GARNET.

A few years ago I was in command of the Brig Haidee, a Baltimore clipper—a long, low, black, raking craft, that looked at a first glance more like an ideal pirate than the peaceful merchantman she really was. We had taken a general cargo and passengers to Savannah, Ga., and thence took in a cargo of rice and a new lot of passengers for Havana, Cuba.

After leaving Savannah we ran free down the Florida coast, until near Cape Canaveral, with a nice northeaster to fill our canvas, keeping well inside the Gulf Stream, out of its strong current, and in sight of land all the time.

With a full crew—two mates and sixteen men, cook and steward, and two cabin-boys, to which were added twelve cabin passengers, we had little room to spare when all hands were on deck, for the brig was only three hundred tons measurement, and as sharp as a wedge fore and aft.

We had just sighted the pitch of Cape Canaveral on our starboard bow, when the northeaster that had served us long and well, began to fail, and I saw with dislike and some misgivings a dirty-looking bank of clouds in the southwest. I went below, and my barometer there told me a change for the worse was close at hand.

"If it only holds off till we can round Cape Florida, and run inside the Florida Reef I'll be thankful," was my remark to Mr. Bishop, my first mate, as I called his attention to what was brewing, and told him to look well to stays, braces, standing rigging, etc., before the gale broke in upon us.

Mr. Booth, our second mate, had the watch. He was small, but the strength of a giant was in that slender form, and his heart was big enough for a giant ten times his size and weight. He put all hands to work to get an extra pull on the back-stays, saw that spare spars and boats were well secured, and before his watch was out reported all snug for what might come, below or aloft.

We had then passed the cape, and were slipping along toward Key Biscayne, or Cape Florida, at a fair rate, for so light a breeze, carrying all the canvas we could spread, but ready to shorten in at a minute's warning, if the wind came out ahead fresh as it threatened.

The passengers, four of whom were ladies—mother and three daughters—the rest gentlemen, had not been

alarmed, for they knew so little of sea life that our busy work was not noticed by them as extraordinary.

But when I saw the crisis close at hand, a change of wind, and a sharp one evidently, the husband of the lady spoken of saw me take the trumpet from the mate, and heard me tell him to call all hands to stand by to shorten sail.

Then he approached, and asked me if there was any danger. My answer was:

"None at all, sir, in a craft well found and stanch as this; but we are about to have a change of wind, and, perhaps, a rough sea with it. Your wife and daughters will be more comfortable below while we are so busy about decks, as we will be when we shorten sail to meet the weather."

"All right, sir—we'll go to the cabin when we are in the way," was his cheerful answer.

The change came even sooner than I expected. Ten minutes after I took the trumpet, the wind died away into a dead calm, while away far along the gulf I saw the black, ragged storm clouds rising swiftly.

Without a second's delay, I had the flying-jib, royals, and stay-sails hauled down, clewed up, and furled. Then top-gallant sails were furled, and everything got ready for reefing topsails. The courses were next taken in, and under the spencer, jib, and two topsails we waited to feel the touch of the southwester.

We had got snug not a minute too soon. I had just put a second man at the wheel, when I saw a mile or so ahead a wall of white foam lifted by the strong-breathed gale that was coming down upon us.

"Lower away both topsails on the caps, haul out the reef-tackles, stand by sheets and braces, and brail up the spencer," I shouted.

While these orders were being obeyed, I turned to the passengers and told them if they did not want to be drenched with spray they must go into the cabin at once.

Every hatch was fast, only the cabin companion-way open, and all ready for it.

"Hard up your helm!" was my next order, and as it was spoken the gale was on us.

It nearly took us aback, but the mate, Mr. Booth, had charge forward, and he had the fore-yard and staysail over to windward in a second, knowing his duty, for he

could hear no order, and the bows veered off while our lee-rail went down to the water fairly under the pressure, and then we shot away before a tempest that made everything crack and snap aloft, while below we were literally almost hidden in the short, white, heaving surges of the sea.

Anxiously I waited for a lull, so that I could reef-down close and haul up on our course, but instead it came harder and harder, and I had, at last, to give the order to clew up and furl, so as to try and come to under the reefed spencer and fore storm-staysail.

It was a terrible job to get those sails in. Both mates and the best men were aloft an hour ere it was done, and it was dark when they came down, and in the worst cross sea I ever saw, we got her head up to wind with only two close-reefed fore and aft sails on to steady her. Ten minutes later when we were getting ready to lower our upper yards and house royal masts, down came everything above the top-mast cross-trees, carried away in ragged unmitigated wreck. Our decks were all awash now, and a tremulous sea took the starboard quarter boat and my own gig in the waist clear out in the davits—both wrecked beyond hope.

And now while utter darkness enveloped us, the gale increasing, if possible, the sea literally rolling "mountains high," a passenger from below crept up to say the ladies were almost wild with fear.

I was in the act of shouting to him so he could hear in that mad turmoil of wind and water, to go back and tell them there was no danger, when a yell from forward reached my ear.

"Sail ho! Close aboard!"

I saw nothing—but the next instant there was a terrible shock, a collision, and for a second we had a glimpse of a hull and spars alongside, and then all was gone in the darkness.

"Sound the pump well, and be quick about it!" was my order to Mr. Bishop.

His answer when he came back to me was startling, but I kept it quiet from the passengers. We were a leak, and badly.

Instantly both pumps were manned. Our rice was in tierces, and if I could keep the water down so it would not reach them, make the rice swell and burst out into bulk and so choke the pumps, all might yet be well. What became of the vessel we had run into we could only surmise. What could be seen as she drifted past made us think she was sinking.

Oh, how manfully my noble crew worked through the rest of the dark, fearful night, while I headed the brig off across the gulf for the nearest land on the Bahama side.

When welcome daylight came, with four feet of water in our hold, the male passengers spelling the crew at the pumps, the gale still at its height, I made an examination forward and found that our cut-water was all torn away, the bow-planks fearfully stove in, and then I knew it was but a question of time, and short time at that, to keep the gallant brig afloat.

But every hour told. We were scudding for land and might make a harbor yet. This word was carried into the cabin to cheer the ladies, while every man lent his aid to keep our craft afloat, except a detail, headed by Mr. Booth, who had orders to have the only seaworthy

boat got ready for use, and to rig a raft of our spars and some tight, strong water-casks, to use in the last emergency.

It came about ten o'clock in the day, with land—Abaco—in sight, ten miles or less ahead. The rice-tierces had got stove, or some of them, at least, the pumps began to choke, and the water poured in thrice as fast as we could get it out.

But the wind lessened some, and as we left the gulf the sea began to go down a little.

Our raft was now ready. It was a rude but strong structure—topmasts, yards, and booms lashed together, and along its sides and at either end empty water casks securely fastened. Over all, ropes were drawn to hold on by, a small quantity of food and drink lashed in among the spars.

The boat we knew could not live in the sea then rolling, but she was kept ready if she could be used when the fatal hour, the sinking of the brig, arrived.

It came when the land was not more than five or six miles away, when all hands were on deck, the ladies placed on the raft, and it was ready to launch when the water was over the decks. The brig gave a sudden lurch, a plunge, and quick as thought we were all in the water, in the vortex made as she went down bows first.

Then our life raft came into play. Buoyant with the air-tight casks, it floated light on the heaving sea, and though our boat filled and capsized, the raft was right side up, and to it every soul on board was indebted for their life.

Fortunately, wrecking sloops were in the sheltered harbor of Abaco, good spy-glasses had been set in our direction, and relief was at hand.

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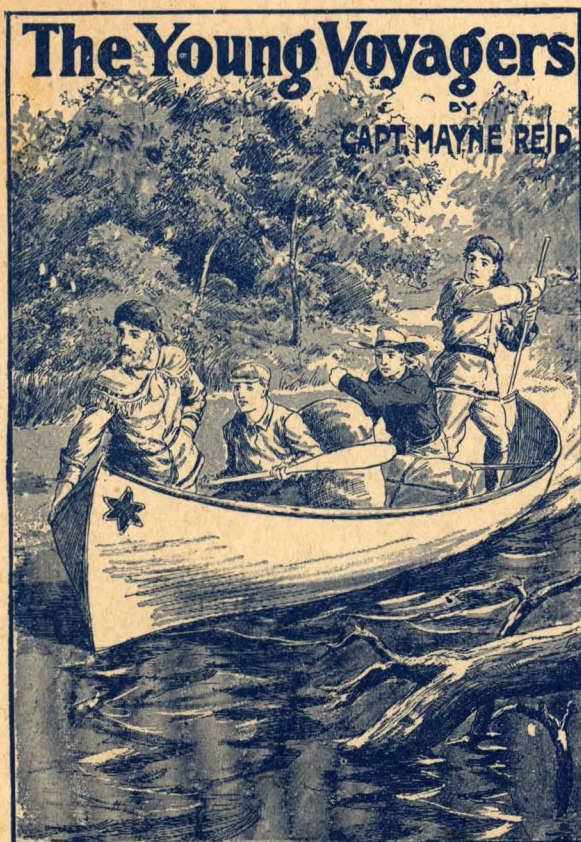
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